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#### REASONABLENESSE

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# Christian Religion,

As delivered in the

# SCRIPTURES.

BEING AN

# ANSWER

To a late TREATISE, intitled

CHRISTIANITY not founded on Argument.

#### In THREE PARTS.

PART I. Contains the Arguments for the TRUTH of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

PART II, The Answers to the Difficulties and Objections proposed by this AUTHOR.

PART III. An Interpretation of the TEXTS, which he hath perverted.

#### By GEORGE BENSON.

#### LONDON:

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# PREFACE.

SHE book, which is here answered, is much lesse than the answer. But every intelligent reader knows that it is easy to couch an objection in a few words, when I the answer cannot possibly be brought into the same compasse. A groundlesse objection may arise from afferting that a thing is constantly so and so, when the answer must be, by an induction of particular instances, to show that it is seldom or never so. Again; An objection may arise from bringing a text to prove what it has no relation to, or from quoting it in such a manner as to set in a wrong light, when the answer must take in most or all of the surrounding circumstances, in order to show what is the proper view of such a text, or that the objection is intirely founded upon a misinterpretation. And finally, I shall be forced to quote, more than once, this author's words, at large, -in which be bas expressed bis main arguments or objections; lest agus As

I should be thought to have misrepresented him. And this

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will considerably swell the answer.

I think it of no moment, who the author of this pamphlet is. If I did know certainly, my concern would not be with his person but with his arguments. Whoever be be, I wish him no barm, but all possible good, and particularly that be may become a rational believer, upon the most clear and convincing evidence. If I had not apprehended his performance to be one continued misrepresentation of Christianity and its true and proper evidence, and calculated to do barm to the generality of readers, I should not have thought it worth my while to have made any remarks upon it. But I am willing to lay hold on this, or any proper occasion, to write in defence of Christianity, as a thing truly rational and well attested, and of sufficient importance to deferve the attention of all these who have it in their power to come acquainted with the nature and evidences

. Notwithstanding what the author has intimated, p. 82, 83. concerning the dialogue stile's unbinging men's principles and unseiling their Faith, I have ventured upon it, and prefer it for the ease with which one may intro-duce an objection and return the proper answer. And Ithink it greatly conduces to keep up the reader's attention. and make the controversy more pleasant and agreeable. How far I bave imitated the manner of the antients, or kept up the characters of the persons, who are introduced, must be left to the reader to determine. I have not returned any answers to the difficulties and objections of this author, but such as I apprehend to carry some weight with them, nor have I designedly, in any place, misrepresented bim. It is true, indeed, it is a very bard matter, in several instances, to fix his meaning, or to be fure that you have his real sentiments. As a proof of his uncertain, or involved, manner of writing, I could allege some instances of Christians, who take him to bave wrote seriously, in defence of Christianity; though

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though such are not found among the rational believers There are other persons, and those not a few, who take it to be one of the boldest and most formidable attacks upon Christianity, that has ever been made. And the adversaries of revelation glory in it as unanswerable. I think rational Christians need be in no pannic about the event: For neither the weak effays of enthusiastic. and irrational Christians, nor what this author, p. 96. calls the peftilential writings of infidels, and the rude attacks of ingenious malice, can prejudice the cause. As Christians have truth and evidence on their side, it can be made appear; and that is the only weapon that ought to be made use of. For a victory obtained in any other way on bt to be dreaded no lesse than a defeat. See the author, p. 92,-101. Such repeted attacks upon rational Christianity must of course lead rational believers to a more careful and exact inquiry into the nature and evidences of their Faith; which cannot fail of ending to the advantage of truth and virtue. It is possible that, upon examination, it may be found that Christians bave mixed fome of their own private fentiments with the pure doctrine of Christ. And, as such things cannot be defended, they had much better part with them, than give up rational Christianity, or load it with those difficulties which efford the most plausible objections against it; though in reality they do not belong to it. Such authors as this (whatever be their design) will, perhaps in the issue, belp us to get rid of such difficulties and incumbrances,—which is, doubtleffe, a very definable thing. - The author of Christianity as old as the Creaion pretended that Reason, or the truth and stinesse of things, is a sufficient rule for all mankind,—that every man is of bimfelf capable of clearly perceiving what is reasonable, fit and proper in all circumstances. From whence he would infer, that there can be no occasion for their being instructed by Revelation. - That was bis way of attacking Christianity. - This author, 17, &c. afferts that the common people cannot reason

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at all, that the generality of apprehensions extend not beyond a simple proposition; that the souls of the multitude are lodged in their hands; and (in one word) that they are incapable of acquiring a rational Faith, or of judging of a rational religion. And, therefore, be contends that there is a necessity for an univerfal inspiration of the Spirit, to infuse Faith, or inspire conviction, or (as be expresses it, p. 112.) a constant and particular Revelation, imparted seperately and supernaturally to every individual. And this be pretends to prove both by Reason and Scripture. To make good this principle of his, he assumes a variety of characters, or collects arguments from different quarters. P. 52. be falls in with the sentiments of the church of Rome, and pleads that miracles ought never to cease. If they do, they are (sais be) by no means a competent support for the cause, or to be produced as conclutive and substantial testimonies for the truth of their religion. And, then, as his own professed fentiments, be afferts, that, if miracles were necessary in the infancy of the Gospel, they are so still, and will be to the end of the world. Whenever they cease, the authority of the evidence, which depended on them, ceases with them. Again, p. 82. be falls in with the sentiments of the church of Rome, and adopts one of her most celebrated maxims. For, baving infinuated that religion ought not to be reasoned about, or examined; - that a prying into it has ever proved a fatal curiofity; that in religion, above all things, familiarity breeds contempt;—he contends that an absolute unacquaintance with these matters is the most effectual security for our inviolable adherence to them; and that ignorance is, in plain terms, the mother of all devotion. The church of Rome takes away the Scriptures from the common people, to prevent a rational Faith, and to make them believe as the church believes. This author sais, p. 89. that puting out the eyes of men is, certainly, the only method

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method in nature to make them fee all alike P. 9. be takes on bim the character of a member of the church of England, as by law established; and baving represented babes, as commencing true believers, at once, by the Faith of their bondimen, whilest as yet they have not the least share, or fymptom of understanding themselves; - and yet be knows not how they could well give a rational affent by proxy. Yet fuch (fais be) is the pleasure and ordinance of God himself in this point. P. 15, 16. be quotes part of one of the Thirty Nine Articles, in support of his argument, concerning good works done before Faith, - having the nature of fin. P. 22, 23. be makes the supposition of a man's reafon's leading him to imbrace Christianity in preference to all the other religious professions in the world; and, then, to diffinguish still further our established church, in particular, as the mode the most conformable to that Divine plan :- And, again, p. 76.-" though men cannot be all of one opinion, they may of one Faith, which they hold not in unity of understanding, but (as our Liturgy well expresses it) in the bond of peace and unity of Spirit." Under the tharacter of a member of the established church, be contends, p. 83. that religion was instituted to prevent controversy, and to that end, pleads for a general rule of Faith: And, p. 84. for the interposition of the civil authority to prevent those unhappy divisions and hateful animolities, which arise only from a fatal and ill-judged indulgence to that restlesse spirit of contradiction and confusion. P. 97. be fais, "the civil magistrate, wherever the Gospel has obtained, has ever taken upon him to inculcate, by all the means in his power, the fame particular belief, without leaving the least part of that talk for the parties concerned, to execute for themselves." And, p. 98.—that the point, he is contending for, appears yet farther, from its being, likewile.

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likewife, the concurrent fense of our holy church in council affembled. We are taught in our Liturgy, to pray, that God would give our magiffrates grace to maintain truth P. gow he affumes another character, and freaks of the full and lasting -affurance of a just and heavenly Faith; to which, if a man bas once arrived, he can never possibly be to feek at any time, for the grounds and motives of his first conviction and dependence. And, in the same page, be infinuates that The Faith, insufed by the Spirit, has force enough to make us virtuous against our inclinations. P. 58, 59. be is for in-Stantaneous conversion and irresistible grace : declaring that this inspiration and insused evidence, - is of immediate influence, and operates without delay. And, speaking of the conversion of Saul, be calls it, a conversion effected, not by the force of dilatory inferences and conclusions, but by an irrelistible light from heaven, that flashed conviction in a moment. Thus called (fais be) the make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off from day to day; our Faith is completed in an instant, &c. Accordingly, be afcribes the fudden convertion of fuch numbers in the primitive church, upon little or no feeming evidence, to the fole and immediate act of the Divinity, whereby the power of God was in a particular manner glorified ; that power which spas of immediate influence, and operated without delay. See p. 40; 58; 65. By and by be wheels about, and talks in quite another strain; and then fais, p. 58. this inspiration, or grace, is, in the first place, universal; and speaks the same thing to all. And, p. 63. this very grace (which he had represented as instantaneous and irrefistible) is described as robat may be resisted by the will of man, (which be declares to be in its nature ever free, p. 64.) For (fais be) The universal tender of this conviction, however potent in its influence (even though he bad represented it as likewile, irre-

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irrefistible) must yet depend greatly upon the proper disposition of our minds, to give it reception for its efficacy, and fo far will give place, and afford ample matter for trial and probation, and become, indeed, a test of our obedience. P. 68, 69. be speaks of persons, who would, by their infidelity of spirit, render its operations, if tried, of no effect.—Again; be, in other places, talks in the stile of an Enthuliast; and then the Spirit is to do all, and bis operation is of equal certainty with any gratifications which fenfible objects can possibly propose. See p. 58. Here is feeling opposed to feeling,—and a strong and palpable, internal fense to ballance all the motions of the external.-Above all, it is of immediate influence, and operates without delay. He, in several parts of his book, pleads for believers being infallible, by their baving the Spirit. And, p. 112. contends for a constant and particular Revelation imparted separately and supernaturally to every in-And, then, - offers up his most ardent prayers, in behalf of bis friend, at the throne of grace, not for leifure to confult, or fagacity to apprehend what learned men have said upon the subject; but that God would be pleased himself to illuminate and irradiate bis mind, with a perfect and thorough conviction of the truth of his Holy Gospel 3-that he would be graciously vouchfafed to renew, once more, his difregarded notices; and establish in bim an uncontrovertible knowlege of its ftrict veracity; fuch an one as that, with the inlightened Apostle, be might, at once, believe, and be fure that Jefus was the Christ; - such a full and home-felt persuafion, as might render superstuous all his further care and labor in fearthing, by fixing him, in the happy inftant, a true, a zealous and unalterable disciple of Christianity. - Such an one is the infightened disciple, p. 59. In this the sum and substance of all argumentation is briefly comprized, the

the very spirit and extract of all-convicting power, of a nature, perhaps, but little differing from that of intuition itself. This is that still, small voice, that bespeaks the immediate presence of the Divinity, and makes its dictates, as it were, felf-evident to the mind where it is lodged. After this be speaks of human learning with contempt; reflecting also on the Scriptures, in comparison of this light within, and fais, we stand no longer, now, in need of any of the credit of antient miracles, or of the genuinenesse of distant records,—a very slender and insussicient ground of Faith; we can vouch, in its stead, a present and standing miracle of our own; - a living witnesse and commentator in our own breasts; that is to abide with us himself, that we might not be left liable, one moment, to a possibility of error and imposition; which must unavoidably be the case, if we were ever left to take the least part of our instructions from one another, p. 60 .-P. 101. be sais, we cannot bear with patience, under any specious pretences, to have that Savior, which we feel, denied in effect, by being called in question. This is, p. 65. the call within, corresponding to the external call, when Jesus said unto Matthew, Follow me, and immediately be left all and followed bim. P. 61. be calls the Scripture a dead letter. P. 73. the most excellent buman learning is carnal wifdom, nay earthly, sensual and devilish. P. 84. we are to deny our reason, to give our Faith fcope:-To captivate our reason to the obedience of Faith, to captivate it, to lay it under the most absolute restraint and prohibition; not to permit it the least opportunity, or freedom, to exert itself, or interpose on any occasion whatever; to look upon the result of human reason, as that carnal wisdom, every where industriously decried in the affair of believing, P. 17. from what he had said above, be infers, that religion can never be a thing

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to be taught; that it must be something which does not require time to attain, like other common lessons and sciences.—How confistent this is with those texts, which injoin men to search the Scriptures; 10 train up a child in the way he should go; to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and that speak of it, as a matter of commendation, that such an one from a child knew the Holy Scriptures, which were able to render him wife unto falvation ; \_ I leave every reader to judge .\_ In the last place, I would point out several passages, in this author, from whence many have been led to take bim for an Infidel, who has put on the various chara-Eters above-mentioned, that he might, through their fides, wound Christianity itself; and collect arguments, from all bands, to prove that the Gospel is an absurd and unreasonable institution of religion. Sometimes, indeed, be speaks in this manner; p. 32. I will very readily grant you all the moral certainty in these proofs, that you can defire; and farther, that this is, indeed, the highest degree of rational evidence that the nature of the subject can, possibly, admit. P. 19. be calls it, that absolute and certain truth of the Gospel, which shines out, indeed, so conspicuoully, upon a proper discussion and acquaintance. And again, demonstrable, doubtlesse, it is; and this demonstration, be allows, may appear to a Locke or a Newton, to men of learning and diligent inquiry; but that it does not lie level to the capacities of the vulgar, or (as be expresses it) to the rude and short-sighted understandings of many, that cannot enter sufficiently into the argument to become apprized of its merits. Hereby Christianity would become almost an uselesse institution, and the common people would be set at liberty from paying any regard to that important Revelation .- But that is not all ;-for, when the Scriptures recommend one thing, be often recommends the contrary. P. 5. be represents it as a dangerous thing to conform to the Apostolic rule, which carries the highest b 2

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reason along with it, viz. Prove all things, hold fast that which is good. Whereas, be fais, If once you come to your proposed situation for proving all things, be affured that you will never hold fast any thing. Again; the Scriptures condemn the Scribes and Pharifees for feeking a fign, or miracle, from Jesus, after the many miracles be bad already worked for their conviction. This author fais, p. 38. If Jefus had, indeed, appealed to their understandings, this bad been so far from any thing criminal, or blame-worthy, that it had been, in all reason, their indispensible duty; whereas it was, it feems, in Faith, an unwarrantable, presumptuous, and vain curiosity. And, in the case of Herod's wanting to see some miracle done by Jesus, he sais, p. 49. that, if miracles had been at all calculated for the purpose of converting, it would have been, furely, countenanced and cultivated as a good promising symptom and mark of a towardly disposition for future discipleship. The coming defirous to canvaffe the evidence, though from no other principle, perhaps, originally, than that of gratifying a light curiofity, were, one would imagine, a turn of mind to be favourably entertained and carefully cherished in a novice, by any who was folicitous to gain profelytes by fuch means, and conscious of having any thing of the kind to produce to him. His way of speaking of the Scriptures will plainly appear, from the following passages, p. 30, &c. He infinuates that they are a doubtful account, a testimony liable to be controverted: And fais, that venerable tradition and historical records, though never fo plaufible and well attested, can yet never, with all its boasted pretensions, be a sufficient basis for a belief, which is to produce a new course of life; it is still all but human testimony this, in its nature ever liable to error, as depending only on fallible authors. And, in the same page, he represents the Faith which arises

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from the Scripture, to be in times of severe trial, nothing more than the precarious conjecture of a fallible judge, upon the traditional testimony of a fallible witnesse. P. 52. He sais, that the voice of God himself, has been, by one intervening age, dwindled long fince to human tradition, God no longer bears witnesse to his Son, but men only bear witnesse to God. The awful found-is funk with us into the uncertain affertions of fallible men, relating it one after another. P. 53. A. miracle, that was ocular proof to its co-temporaries, to us is no more than uncertain hear-fay. That feeing is, indeed, believing, has ever been allowed reasoning; but that I am to believe a thing, because another fais he saw it, and it is not in my power to prove a negative and contradict him, is furely a very unprecedented and new fort of logic. The testimony of fight is, by its nature, an evidence not to be communicated: All the affurance, in the world, of another's feeing, can never have an equal effect upon my fenses, or make me see a thing where I was not actually present. [A rational Christian would say, in answer to this, " I do not expett that you should fee by the eyes of another, or where you yourfelf were not actually present; but you ought to pay regard to the testimony of credible persons." But this author takes care to except against this way of arguing also, and sais, p. 51. These mighty works could be no demonstration to any that were not actually and personally present when they were done; and, for the same evident reason, can be none to us now. And, p. 52. The light of conviction, therefore, which is thus received, can extend no farther than to the eyewitnesse himself, lost and extinguished the first moment it is offered to be imparted. P. 59. He takes notice that the inlightened disciple-need not apply. to libraries for a more competent information and . della

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discovery. [He need not so much as read the Scriptures for the time to come. For what is there after this remaining in-these suspicious repositories of human testimony, that can now deserve our least notice, or be thought of consequence to ingage a moment's attention upon this subject? Again; be fais, we fland no longer, now, in need of any of the credit of antient miracles, or the genuinenesse of distant records; a very slender and infufficient ground, as I have shewn, to answer all the great purposes, and insure all the rigid demands of religion. See p. 60. He calls them manuscript authorities and paper revelations, composed-of perishable materials, which must in time come to want repairs. P. 61. Every transcript is a copy and representation at second hand, which will (like the tradition of a miracle) detract, in a great degree, from its divine authority; as this must neceffarily be the work of man, and liable of course, from a thousand causes, to fall short, and deviate from its great exemplar. He likewife adds, the oppofers of the Gospel say, indeed, this is the case; and infift strongly that the facred text has been actually much adulterated. And be will not take upon bim, at present, to determine, whether their affertion is true or no. Nay, if the facred text did now remain uncorrupted, in every particular, be pronounces it still absolutely defective and insufficient for any fuch reveling purpose as they would expect. And in the same page he calls the Scripture, a dead letter, as I have taken notice above. P. 68. be fais, that Jefus Christ was particularly cautious of exposing his person, after his refurrection, to public view; when his taking one turn in the market-place might have spared both the painful labors and lives of fo many holy vouchers, who perished merely by the thing's being done in a corner. P. 36, 37. be represents our Savior, as not allowing the difciples

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riples to expect, or desire, any rational evidence, any arguments or proofs, of his mission; intimating that be was always cautious and referved; -that he did but ill approve the being called on, upon any occafion, to explain ; that be discouraged their farther inquiry, even at times when they did not really apprehend his meaning :- p. 38. that he refused to work a miracle, when persons desired a sign, or miracle of bim, and that as a rational evidence for their discipleship; -p. 48. that he was always remarkably upon the referve, in that respect, whenever he happened among unbelieving company; and was particularly sparing of these supposed arguments, amongst the very persons who seemed most to want them .- I hope to show, in the clearest manner, that Jesus Christ appealed to his miracles, in proof of bis mission and doctrine; in order to gain disciples, or confirm such as, upon some preceding evidences, were already become bis disciples. But this author, p. 48. often intimates the contrary, viz. that our Lord had not any fuch meaning, as to convince by these works; -more plainly still, that he had no such intention to prove his own truth and character by these instances of his power; he often industriously avoided that accidental consequence, and took particular care to prevent their ever coming to public notice; - that be generally charged such as be cured, to tell no man. P. 49. be insinuates that our Lord was so far from any thought of procuring disciples, by his miracles, that he made a bargain with them before-hand, that they should first believe; -His words are, -A certain degree, and that no ordinary one, of previous confidence and persuasion, appears to have been constantly stipulated for beforehand, to intitle them to have their applications at all listened to, or regarded, and to be the sole meafure and rule of dispensing these occasional favors. The character he has given of our Lord, p. 67. is as unworthy and unjust.—See, likewise, his representa-1107 Saratile.

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tion of the conduct of the Apostles, p. 38, &c. where they are described as always in haste, as not allowing men to afk questions, or demand any rational evidence, as circulating their creeds, and infifting conftantly on the ready acknowlegment of their doctrines, without any concessions of time for doubt, or deliberation; as never attempting to inform the understanding, or convince the judgment, of one fingle person. -Having contended for Faith without reason, be, p. 82. represents Christianity as a thing not to be reafoned about, nor too curiously pried into ; that familiarity, in religion, above all things, breeds contempt; -that an absolute unacquaintance with these matters is the most effectual security for our inviolable adherence to them; and that ignorance is, in plain terms, the mother of all devotion.—These, and the like, are the passages from whence many have been induced to look upon the author, as an infidious and covert advocate for infidelity.-Finally; there are others again, who suspect that he is no more a friend to natural religion, than be is to reveled. This they gather from his speaking of the common people as incapable of reasoning, as baving apprehensions which extend not beyond a simple proposition, as unable to form any judgment about matters of religion. The consequence of which would be, that natural religion is as little calculated for the bulk of mankind as reveled;that they are excused from all religion, and can have no concern in the affair.—Truth has evidence which falfhood never can have; and good an amiableness and excellence which evil is destitute of: And the Apo-Ale fais, what is highly reasonable, viz. that we must first prove all things, and then hold fast that which is good, and abstain from every kind of evil. This author fais, p. 5. If I am once left free to examine, I can, by no means, be tied up in the iffue. P. 26. be fpeaks of a rational Faith, as always very precarious. For what reason first established,

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blifhed, it is evident (fais be) the fame reason must ever have the power to repeal. As if reason and evidence were like enthusiasm, fancy and credulity, -ever liable to shift about from one point of the compasse to another. P. 44. If a man is to be held. only by his own reasonings, - that would be stamp ing an equal mark of truth upon a thousand opposite opinions. P. 96. be sais, reason may chance to lead a man wrong as well as right. P. 16. the unquiet effays of reasoning, curious dispositions [disquisitions] upon his [i.e. God's] being and attributes, - are practices utterly inconfistent with the pretentions of all fuch as call themselves Christians, P. 42. be speaks of eternal relations, moral differences of things, and a precise delineation of the religion of nature and its obligations, as a-fort of precarious things, and far from being fuch obvious truths as can never possibly appear otherwise. But what offends the friends to natural religion, most, is what he has faid, p. 81. concerning the first volume of Dr. Clarke's Boyle's Lectures, which that great and good man wrote in defence of the being of a Got, and of his natural and moral perfections; in answer to the difficulties and objections of Hobbes, Spinoza, Blount, Toland, and such like men; a book, which will ever be valued by the most learned and judicious;and yet be afferts, that these labored productionshave rather contributed to make for the other fide of the question, and raised a thousand difficulties in the reader's mind, which would never else have occured to him; where it has fent away one fingle person satisfied in the point; or indeed left him in the same degree of persuasion it found him. I do not take upon me to determine whether these things are said in railery, or seriously. They, who understand him to be in earnest, do justly condemn such passages, as representing natural religion to be wholly precarious and uncertain:

#### The PREFACE.

-as the passages mentioned before, would overthrow all the rational grounds and evidences of Revelation.

I am not obliged to declare my own sentiments concerning the real character of this author, and his manner of writing. I apprehend that rational Christianity is the only Christianity worth contending for; and, indeed, the only true Christianity. And, if I show that there is sufficient evidence for a rational belief;—it is all one to the argument, whether the objections procede from a real Enthusiast, or a disguised Unbeliever. What is a good argument against one, is a good argument against all; and nothing but what is wise and reasonable can deserve the attention or regard of men, whom God has created teasonable Creatures.

N. B. The texts refered to, in the margin, are fuch as were misapplied by the author of Christianity not founded on Argument; and the pages refered to, are such and such pages, in the second edition of his book.

London, April 18.





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### REASONABLENESSE

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# CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

As delivered in the

## SCRIPTURES.

#### INTRODUCTION.

TRRHO, Theophilus and Crito used frequently to meet and converse. They had been brought up together from their infancy. And, the persons of very different tempers and ways of life, they continued to preserve an

intimacy, which had grown up with them from the begining. Pyrrho had of late frequented the company of some persons who were continually talking against revelation, and making religion in general the common subject of their mirth and ridicule. They had picked up several of the objections, thrown out by some late writers; and B Pyrrho,

Pyrbo, having never studied the point, was unable to answer them himself, and therefore concluded that they were unanswerable. This gave a new turn to his conversation, and made him exceding apt to raise difficulties and start objections, whenever religion was the subject. Tho' he had as strong a faith in other things as most men; and, as King Charles the IId, is reported to have faid of Volfius,-He believed almost every thing but his Bible. philus was a man of great piety, plain fense and great fagacity, who retained fo much of what he had learned in his younger days, as to be able to confult his Greek Testament; but had not a great deal of learning befides. But Crito was a man of great erudition, and was thought to have made a considerable progresse in critical knowlege. They well knew each other's character and talents, and could with temper talk on a variety of fubjects. One evening their conversation turned upon a late book intitled, Christianity not founded on Argument; concerning which Pyrrbo was very copious and eloquent, as his manner was on fuch occasions; and he extolled it as an extraordinary and even unanswerable performance. Theophilus said, with a fmile, He knew fo much of his friend Pyrrbo, that, if it was an attack upon revelation, it must be, in his account, a very extraordinary performance indeed; and that he had observed of such gentlemen, that they always represented the last book, wrote on their side, as the most considerable that ever had appeared, and frequently indeavored to fpread their mighty performances, by giving out, that they were afraid of the civil government's laying hold on the author, for his shrewd infinuations against the religion of bis country, &cc. Pyrrbo faid, he supposed Theophilus had not read the book; and upon that, declaimed very fluently against partiality, and narrownesse of spirit, and reading on one

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one fide only. Theophilus let him know that, if he had a mind to recriminate, he could charge the enemies of revelation with as great partiality, and point out some of them, who were determined to read fuch books only, as were on the infidel fide of the question. Nay, that he could produce the man, yet alive, and a man of veracity, who went to visit the famous Dr. Tindal, and found him reading the New Testament : and, when he expressed his furprize at it, the Doctor faid, You read the Scriptures, that you may believe them; I, on the contrary, read them, that I may not believe them. However (continued Theophilus) I am so well satisfied of the truth of Christianity, and that it is founded on folid and rational evidence, that I am not afraid of reading any thing that can be writ against it. Though, at the same time, I do not think myself obliged to read every book, that is wrote, on one fide or the other. For, when I have fatisfactory evidence, that is fufficient; and a truth, which is once well proved, cannot be overthrown, or confuted. I have, indeed, read the treatife you speak of, and find men of various opinions about it :-- fome looking upon the author as writing in defence of Christianity, the' not of rational Christianity. Others look upon the book as a bitter farcasm upon enthusiast and irrational Christians, designed to cure men of fuch groundlesse sentiments and follies. Whereas the generality view him in the same light with my friend Pyrrbo, and confider him as only wearing the mask of a friend to Revelation, and representing it as unreasonable, in order the more effectually to attack the rational evidence of Christianity. It is all one to me which way you take him. The arguments themselves are full of sopbistry, and have a bad tendency, wherever they are taken to be conclusive. I dare undertake to prove that Christianity is founded on Argument, in opposition to this author, whether

whether he is Christian, or Insidel. Pyrrho was full of hopes that Theophilus, by reading such an acute performance, would have been staggered and become the disciple of the Sceptics. But, when he found him as much a believer as ever, notwithstanding he had perused that author, he was unwilling to leave the matter fo, and therefore proposed an examination of the book, in the dialogue way, which bis author, p. 82, 83. had taught him to be fo dangerous to a rational faith. Theophilus was not difpleased at the proposal; but very coolly ingaged to make good what he had faid ; begging of Crito to preside in the debate, till there should be occafion for critical learning, and then he must defire his affiftance, in order to explain some of the texts which the author had perverted; - or the like. Pyrrbo feconded that motion; upon which Crito

#### The SECOND EVENING.

evening.

came into their proposal. The preliminaries being settled, the two disputants agreed to come prepared to begin the examination of this argument the next

Their agreement took air, by their telling some of their friends, and their telling others again, till at last there happened to be a more numerous audience than they had expected. This made them dubious at first whether they should procede or no; but, upon finding them all to be friends and acquaintance, who would have withdrawn, if they had desired it, rather than interrupt their conversation,—they allowed them to attend if they pleased; —which they in general chose to do, and continued to attend, from evening to evening, till they had quite finished their design.

When Crito had taken the chair, Theophilus and Pyrrho placed themselves over-against one another,

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and then the conversation proceded as follows. Theophilus began with faying that, as he was called upon to defend rational Christianity, either against an enthusiastic believer, or a disguised insidel, he would take his own method, that he might handle the subject in a clear and distinct manner. For things may be proved one way, which could never have been proved another. Who (for inflance) would pretend to demonstrate the 32d proposition in the first book of Euclid, viz. that the three angles of every triangle are equal to two right angles 3— or the 47th, viz. that the square of the bypothenuse is equal to the squares of the other two sides of any right-angled triangle, -without first demonstrating the preceding propofitions, upon which the proof of these depends? Who would go to instruct a man in algebra, before he has learned common arithmetic? or who would attempt to make a child read words and fentences, without first teaching him letters and fyllables? I mention these things the rather, because I have observed great perplexity in the method of some authors, who write in the most artful or involved manner; which is, indeed, the way to puzzle and confound things, but not to clear up truth, or set evidence in its proper light.

The method, I propose, is this,—After having settled the meaning of the word [Faith;] I would (1.) Mention some of the principal arguments which are, in Scripture, proposed to effect such a Faith. (2.) Answer such difficulties and objections as Pyrrbo shall see sit to propose out of bis author. (3.) Indeavor to give the true sense of those texts, which the author has perverted, or alleged to a purpose quite different from their original intention. If, Pyrrbo, you have any objection to my method, be pleased to allege it. Pyrrbo intimated that he was satisfied with the order of proceeding, which Theophilus had pitched upon, and desired that he

would go on immediately to fettle the meaning of the word Faith. For, if it mean an act of the understanding, or a mere affent, is it in a man's power to believe, or not believe as he pleases? If he sees evidence for any thing, he cannot help believing it; and, if there is no evidence, he cannot affent, or believe. I therefore would ask you to solve the difficulty, proposed by my author, p. 8, &c. With wibat regard, with what patience, rather, can one-be supposed to attend to questions, propounded to bim, under the restraints of threats and authority? to be talked to, of danger in his decisions, and have the rod beld out with the lesson; to have propositions tendered to his reason. with penalties annexed? His reason, ever necessitated to determine just as she does of berself; and, by ber nature, incapable, either of paying compliments, or giving offence. He is conscious all the while that he has no such free vote to dispose of; and therefore distains, with all justice, an attempt, equally weak and unjust, of frightening bim into a compliance out of bis power. I was willing, Theophilus, that you should see the difficulty, before you fet out; and thereby fave the trouble of having occasion to return to this point; when you come to answer my difficulties and objections.

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Theophilus intimated that he was aware of the difficulty; and observed that the word [Faith] was, in Scripture, used in a variety of senses. Sometimes, indeed, it signifies an assent upon sight, or upon the credible testimony of others; sometimes it means an assent to the principles of natural religion, such as the being of a God and his government of the world, deduced by reason from the visible works of creation and providence. In other places, it signifies no more than believing that Jesus, or his disciples, had the power of working miracles. In some sew texts it stands for one of the miraculous gifts, and signifies "a firm persuasion of mind, "arising from an impulse of the Spirit, inabling "them

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45 them to fet about some miraculous operation, " in full affurance of God's affifting them." Very frequently Faith imports, a belief that Jesus was the Christ. In several texts, Faith is put for the whole Gospel, or for imbracing the Gospel; as a part is, by an usual figure of speech, put for the whole. Sometimes it fignifies a perfevering, or being confirmed, in our adherence to the Gospel. Sometimes Faith is put for truth, or fidelity, or even obedience to God, or Christ. There is no confusion arises from these various senses of the word. For whoever will, with any tolerable care and attention, confult the feveral places, will eafily perceive in which of these senses it ought any where to be understood.

The Faith, which I am now to explain, is that What that which is required of those, to whom the Gospel is Faith is, made known, with sufficient evidence. This Faith which is is always a virtue; and consequently not a mere the Gospel. act of the understanding, or a bare assent upon evidence; but it is partly an affent of the understanding and partly an act of the will. There are one or two things previous to the affent of the understanding, and one or two things subsequent; which are all implied in the scriptural notion of Faith. The previous acts are such as these.—To lay aside prejudice, to cultivate a love to truth, a willingnesse to attend and to examine such truths as concern our moral and religious conduct. That part of the crime of unbelief, which stands opposed to this, must be want of due attention to reasonable evidence, or a backwardnesse to examine. The Apostle Paul, instead of commanding men to believe, implicitly and without any rational arguments, incouraged a spirit of free inquiry, injoining his converts to prove, or examine, all things; and then to bold fast that which is good. By which he meant, that they were not only left free to inquire, if they

The first they pleased, into the truth of all fundamentals in relitext exgion, but that it was actually a duty, incumbent upon plained. Theff. v. men so to do, and a fatal and unpardonable neglett to omit 21. allud- it. That they could never answer it, either to God, or ed to by themselves, to be any one's disciple, without the warrant the author of that reason he had given them to judge by, and that purposely to distinguish between truth and falshood. That

it was, in sbort, a qualification indispensibly required at The second their bands, to be always able and ready (as St. Peter text exhas intimated) to give an intelligible and satisfactory plained: See p. 77. and r Pet. in. 15.

account of the ground of their faith, to any that should ask them the question, or desire a reason of the bope that was in them. [See the author, p. 77.] In perfect harmony with these two Apostles, St. Luke, the facred historian, has commended the Jews at Beraa, as more noble than those of Thessalonica, because of their diligent fearch and examination into the grounds and reasons of what the Apostle taught them. (2d.) Another of the previous acts is to entertain fuch an opennesse and candor of mind as readily to receive truth upon fuch fort of evidence as things

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text explained. See p. 75. and Mark x. 15. Luke

xviii. 17.

The third are capable of. This is what our Savior has termed receiving the Gospel as a little child, i. e. (not as your author has explained it, p. 75. without reason, or understanding; but) with an honest and unprejudiced, a fair and tractable disposition of mind, without the biasse of one educated in salse notions, the conceit of the opinionated philosopher, or the aversion to truth, which frequently appears in wicked and worldly-minded men. All truths are not capable of the same fort of proof. And it is folly and perverineffe to require fuch evidence, in any case, as the thing is incapable of. Some truths are self-evident. Some abstract truths are capable of demanstration. But matters of fact can be known no otherwise than by the report of one's own senfes, or the testimony of others. And the testimony of credible persons has, in all ages, been regarded,

not by the vulgar only, but by men of the best judgment and greatest learning. There is certainly some virtue in having a disposition of mind candidly to inquire into the nature and evidence of moral and religious truths. It is plain that fome men judge not according to evidence but determine without inquiry, and judge according to inclination. Not only false opinions, but also wicked practices, strangely biasse the minds of many. They are afraid left the truth should condemn their course of life, and therefore they have an aversion to it. This, in the language of scripture, is called men's Thefourth closing their eyes, stopping their ears, and bardening their text exhearts, lest they should see with their eyes, hear with plained. See p. 36. their ears, and understand with their bearts. And, and John in such cases, their foolish beart is justly said to be xii. 40. derkened. Such persons, overlooking the evidences Rom. i. already afforded, are always cavilling and demand- 21. ing new, or other fort of, evidence: They eatch at every specious appearance of an argument, or objection, to make themselves easy in rejecting truths of fuch importance; but are afraid of examining things to the bottom, left they should be thereby condemned. Such are the reasons, which our Savior has affigned, of men's want of faith in him and his Gospel. For, having mentioned the happy confequences of faith and the dreadful confequences of unbelief, he sais, John iii. 19, &c. This is the condemnation [i. e. of fuch as remain in unbelief, when the Gospel is laid before them with sufficient evidence; \_] that light is come into the world, and these men bave loved darknesse more than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one that doth evil, hateth the light; neither cometh be to the light, left his deeds should be reproved. But be, that practifeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are done according to the will of God. Jesus faid unto the Jews, who fought to take away his life, you will not come unto me, that you may have life. And the

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the reason is added, v. 42. I know you that you have not the love of God in you. And he inquires of them v. 44. How can you believe, that receive bonor, one of another, and seek not the bonor which cometh from God alone? Hence we may gather the evident reason of what is faid, John xvi. 9. viz. that when the Spirit should come, be should convict the world of Sin, because they had not believed in Jesus before. For, upon this additional evidence, it would be still more manifest that Fesus was the Christ, and that nothing but criminal prejudices had prevented their believing in him, upon his own miracles and the other attestations he had given them, before his crucifixion. This is, likewise, the reason, which St. Paul has affigned, of men's rejecting the truth and imbracing delusions, 2 Thess. ii. 10, &c. For he describes them to be such a fort of men as had not received the love of the truth: And he directly opposeth the The fifth belief of the truth to taking pleasure in unrighteousnesse. It was among persons of such bad dispositions that the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed

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text explained. See p. 68. iv. 2.

and Heb. with faith in them that heard it. Lesse evidence would do, in many cases, if truth was more grateful. But, when men diflike the things to be proved, they are very unwilling to attend to, or allow the force of, those arguments which are to convince them. It is evident men's wills, appetites, passions and inclinations have great influence upon their faith. However, men ought to remember that things are obstinate, and will not alter with their wishes. And every wife man fees that the right way is coolly and carefully to confider what is propofed, however it may affect him; and to receive the truth according to the importance and evidence of it. -These are the things, which are previous to the affent of the mind, and are included in the scriptural notion of faith. Pyrrho said, you took notice, Theophilus, of some subsequent acts, which are also included in the notion of faith. I did so, replied

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replied Theophilus, and they are also two; -both of which have their feat in the will, and are material parts in the virtue of faith. The one is, " that we "openly professe and acknowlege the truth, " when we fee it, or are convinced of it; even " though it should expose us to some dangers or " difficulties." That part of the crime of unbelief which stands opposed to this, is men's being ashamed of the truth, or stiffling religious fentiments; though in their minds they are convinced of them, or suspect that they are true. There are persons who, in some places and company, are afraid of the very appearance of religion, or of being fufpected of believing; though in their hearts they cannot forbear having a fecret veneration for it. They must be in the fashion; they dread the cenfure of fome of their acquaintance; they cannot stand the ridicule of insolent wit and low bustoonery; they want to diffinguish themselves as persons of fuperior genius and uncommon penetration, who fcorn to think in the common tract, or believe as the vulgar do. They would be the first in the profession of religion, when that is the turn of the age, in repute with the great vulgar, as well as with But, in a time and place of persecution, the *mall*. or when the profession of religion exposes a man to contempt, or ridicule; then, they have not the courage and the honesty to professe their sentiments. This is a behavior, of which a brave and upright man would fcorn to be guilty! This is betraying Faith and a good conscience! And this has been the vice of mean-spirited and worldly men in many places and ages. This was, by our Savior, affigned as the cause, why several of the leading men among the Jews refused to professe their Faith in him, John xii. 42, 43.—Several of the rulers believed on bim; but because of the Pharisees they confessed bim not, lest they should have been put out of the synagogue.

gogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. But the Apostle, Rom. x. 9, 10. intimates that confession with the mouth is necessary to falvation, as well as believing with the heart. And, to induce his disciples not to fear men, who can but kill the body, in comparison of God, who can destroy both The fixth foul and body in bell; our Savior has declared, who-

text explained. See p. 45. Matt. x. 28, &c. 38,

foever shall be ashamed of me and my words, for Gospel,] in this adulterous and finful generation, of him shall the son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his father, with the holy angels .- And the Mark viii. man, who hath wanted fuch love to truth, and fuch integrity and fortitude in the profession of it, will be then very rationally and justly condemned; notwithstanding what your author has infinuated,

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p. 45. When Christianity first apeared, there were no worldly honors and emoluments to induce any persons to take upon them the Christian profession; but on the contrary, many and great difficulties and discouragements. There was no pomp and external splendor to dazzle their eyes and attract their regard; but a fimple, plain, spiritual religion; There were no baits and allurements from fenfual pleasures, such as accompanied the worship of Venus, Bacchus, &cc. But in Christianity all fuch things were feverely condemned. Again; the first converts had many of the prejudices of education to conquer, before they could fee the evidences of the Gospel and imbrace the Christian Faith. And, after they became the disciples of Jesus, the open profession of the Gospel exposed them to many hardships and difficulties, not only from strangers and enemies, but it frequently caused a man to have foes among those of his own bonshold: And the Christians were, then, a feet every were spoken against. Nor did Jesus Christ, or his Apoltles, make any secret of it, in order to draw in converts;

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converts; but declared, in the plainest terms, that unlesse a man forfook his possessions, his dearest friends, and even life itself, if called thereto, he could not be a disciple of Christ's. For such were told that, through much tribulation, they must enter into the kingdom of God; and that all, that would live godlily in Christ Jesus, must expect to suffer persecution. For this was the victory, wherewith they were to overcome the world, even their Faith. Notwithstanding all these dark prospects, in this world, they were not to make any fecret of their Christian Faith, but to professe it publicly, and to hold fast the profession of it without wavering; to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in beaven they should have a better and a more induring substance;—to strive even unto blood. And, instead of fainting or being dejected. they were to rejoice and be exceding glad, because great would be their reward in beaven, in proportion to their suffering for righteonsnesse sake, on earth. So had the prophets and the best of men been treated; and so was the well-beloved fon of God; who, under the greatest trials, whould never defert the truth; no. not even in the prospect of the most cruel and infamous death.—In such circumstances, the imbracing the Christian religion was a virtue, and the public profession of it argued great virtue and fortitude. But, in all times and places, generally speaking, a man is exposed to some difficulties by an open profession of truth; and a steddy, resolute adherence to it. And fuch a profession is one of the subsequent acts; or a part of Faith, which ought to follow the affent of the understanding, and hath its feat in the will. Pyrrba, observing Theophilas to make a short pause, put him in mind that he had spoken of another subsequent act, which (as he understood it) was to complete his notion of Faith. Theophilus faid that Pyrrbo understood him right, and he would now procede to the ferond ( and last)

last) of the subsequent acts of the will, which in Faith, considered as a virtue, was to follow the affent of the mind, viz. " to take care that our Faith " (or affent to the truth of the Gospel) be in us a " principle of right action." Your author, Pyrrho. has observed, p. 13. that Faith is to influence our actions and direct our conduct through life. Accordingly we read in the scriptures, once and again, of the obedience of Faith, Rom. i. 5. and xvi. 26. and of men's being obedient to the Faith, Acts vi. 7. And, Rom. x. 16. Believing is evidently the same thing with obeying the Gospel. Again, Acts xv. 9. We read of men's purifying their bearts by Faith; and, Gal. v. 6. of Faith's working by love. It is, therefore, no wonder that the scriptures often speak of the righteousnesse of Faith, and of men's being justified by Faith; when it is considered as a principle of moral and religious conduct. They, who do not lead fuch holy lives, as Faith teaches them, may be justly said to bold the truth in unrighteousnesse. In order to render Faith a more effectual principle of right action, a well disposed person will frequently review the grounds and reasons of his Faith, that it may animate him more steddily to the most excellent conduct, And it is evident that, in scripture, Faith must mean more than a bare assent to the truth of Christianity; because there are numberleffe paffages which intimate that fuch an affent alone can fignifie nothing. Whenever, therefore, promises are annexed to Faith, it must be upon the fupposition that it leads men to do the will of God and obey his commandments; otherwise they shall never injoy the kingdom of beaven; -even though they have not only believed in Christ, but also, in his name, prophefied and worked miracles - for Jesus Christ will regard the Faith of none who have led wicked lives, or been workers of iniquity. Accordingly it is declared, 1 Tim. v. 8. that, if 4 man,

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man, who professes the Christian Faith, doth not behave aright, be bas denied the Faith, and is worse than an infidel. And, to put this matter out of all doubt, we have the authority of an Apostle, writing professedly upon this point. For, when some of the primitive Christians had mistaken, or perverted, what St. Paul had faid, concerning justification by Faith, without the works of the law; - [by which he meant that they were to be justified by the Gospel method, and not by the law of Moses :- But they represented him as faying, that " a bare affent " to the Christian Faith was sufficient, without the " practice of the Christian precepts, or any farther " conformity to the law of Faith, than mere believing ; \_ ] To rectifie that fatal mistake, St. James wrote part of his epistle, viz. ch. ii. 14, &c. where he teaches us, that we are to show our Faith by our works ; that Faith without works is dead ; that the Faith of Abraham co-operated with his works, and that by works bis Faith was rendered perfett; \_ that Abrabam was justified by Faith joined with good works; from whence he infers that a man is justified by works, and not by Faith alone; and finally, that, as the body without the spirit is dead, so Faith without works is dead also.

To sum up this whole matter; Faith is a complex thing, being partly an act of the understanding, partly of the will. As an act of the understanding, or assent of the mind upon evidence, it is necessary, and can have no virtue in it. But, as it is an act of the will, it derives all its value from its being a virtuous disposition of mind, a candor or love to truth, or a principle of virtue and piety. Unbelief, on the other hand, is not a mere doubting, or with-holding one's affent, when there is no evidence; but it is a vice, which consists in indulging criminal prejudices, in an aversion to truth, or in men's resulting to search and examine, for fear the disco-

discovery of truth should condemn their course of life :- or in refuling to professe, and be influenced by, those truths which they have already discovered, I have been informed that when Celfus, the antient adversary of the Christian Religion, would have represented the Christians as " rash, credulous and believing without reason, and contending for Faith alone, as sufficient;" - Origen answered, There is (to say the least) as much examination of things believed in Christianity, as in Philosophy. And the Christian Faith is a more excellent help to the multitude, as appears from its baving freed fuch numbers from the vices in which they formerly wallowed. [Vid. Origen. contra Celsum. L. 1.]

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Why men are commanded to believe, or for their infidelity.

And, notwithstanding what you have quoted from your author, p. 8. concerning the absurdity of commanding men to believe, or threatening them threatened for unbelief; - all which goes upon the supposition of Faith's being a mere act of the understanding, or an affent of the mind upon evidence; which is necessary, and therefore cannot be the matter of a command, as being a compliance out of our power; yet he hath plainly contradicted himfelf, and found out, p. 64. that disbelieving and guilt bave a meaning, when put together, since the compliance required is no langer that of the understanding, but of the will, in its nature free, and therefore accountable. And, though we are not by any means chargeable with the effects of our apprehension; yet there is no reason but that we may be, with all justice, called to the Arittest account for our obstinacy, impiety and perversnesse. If this, therefore, be the case, (as I have plainly shewn it to be, and as your author himself has allowed it, even in the very affair of Faith, or believing) then men may rationally be commanded to believe, and threatened beby the au- cause of unbelief. It may rationally be said, He that believeth not shall be downed. Men may be talked Mark avi, to, concerning the danger of their decifiens, and hove the

The 7th text explained; -quoted thor, p. 117.

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2946 the the rod beld out with the lesson; they may be cautioned to take heed how they indulge vicious prejudices, or go on to love darknesse rather than light, because their deeds are evil. They may be justly condemned for refuling to professe their religious fentiments, or not fuffering their Faith to influence their conduct.

Men may declaim against credulity. And it must be granted that too many in all ages have been too hafty and credulous. But then others, again, have been too fceptical, and have refused to believe, when the evidence, if attended to, would have been fufficient. Some have looked upon the Christian Religion, as a fort of touch-stone, to try men's integrity, and whether they have that candor, attention, and Luke ii. love to truth and virtue, which is justly required (a). 34. 35. God alone knows how to proportion to every age, John ix. nation and person, the evidences of those truths, 39 which he puts in their power to know, or believe.

Your author has misrepresented Jesus's answer to Thomas; which will receive a most plain and easy The eighth interpretation from what has been faid, and there- text, or fore I mention it here. The case was this ; Thomas, our Lord's one of the Apostles, had seen his Lord frequently answer to work miracles; nay had, himself, received a power Thomas, from Jesus of working miracles, and had gone out John xx. and exercised that power;—He had often heard his explained. Mafter fay that he was to die a violent death, and See p. 77. rife again the third day; -He knew that he had, 78. according to his repeted prediction, undergone a violent death; and he had received an account from persons of undoubted veracity, who were his own intimate friends, that Jefus was risen from the dead, and that they had feen him :- Notwithstanding all these things, he, rashly and without any folid reason, declared, that " unlesse he might, "himself, see in Jesus's hands the print of the " nails, and put his finger into the print of the es nails,

" nails, that had fastened him to the crosse; and " moreover thrust his hand into the place where " the spear had pierced his side, he would not " believe." Jesus did, indeed, condescend to grant him all these evidences, which he had insisted upon; but withall gave him a gentle reproof, and faid, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; Blessed are they who see not, and yet believe :- the plain meaning of which is, that Faith, as a mere act of the understanding, or arising from ocular demonstration, and when he could no longer possibly avoid believing, could have, fo far, no virtue in it; and that Thomas wanted fomewhat of the proper disposition of mind, which would have led him to have paid a due regard to the evidences that had been already afforded him; that it was a fault in him to reject sufficient evidence in any way; and to refolve to disbelieve, unlesse he could have his own particular humor gratified, and was indulged in that very kind and degree of evidence which he himself demanded.

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Here is nothing like an intimation that Thomas's pretensions to bis Master's favor diminished in proportion to the degree of the evidence be had thought fit to require of bim; for, if he had paid a proper regard to the evidence already afforded him; and then, with a becoming modelly and inquiring mind had, for his still greater fatisfaction, defired more; there is no reason to think that he would have had any reproof from our Lord at all. But, for a man, who had had very confiderable evidence; who had not only seen the miracles of Jesus, but had himfelf worked miracles by a power derived from Jesus; who had heard him often fay that he should be put to death, and be raifed again the third day ; who had had the concurrent testimony of so many credible persons, of his own acquaintance, who all affured him that they had feen Jesus alive again ;for

for him, I fay, in effect to declare, " all thefe " evidences shall go for nothing, unlesse I have " fome more, and that just in my own way;"was certainly criminal and deferved a rebuke. I have observed already that the virtue of Faith confifts in having an honest and teachable mind, a difposition to attend to truth, and to be influenced by it. If, therefore, upon the rational evidences of Christ's refurrection, or any other rational evidences (though of a different and inferior kind) we as fincerely imbrace the Gospel, and as carefully conform to the rules of it, as Thomas did, when he had ocular demonstration, and could no longer possibly avoid believing; - we may justly be pronounced more bleffed, and be defervedly applauded for fuch a disposition and behavior. Here is no incouraging a forward propensity to assent, without any rational evidence, nor any marks of approbation of rashnesse and credulity; - but a teaching men that there is virtue in making the best of any kind of evidence; and that we ought not to infift upon our own humors and fancies, and demand evidence just in our own way; or declare that all the evidences we have already had, tho' very great and considerable, shall with us pass for nothing at all.

Here Theophilus made a full pause; and Pyrrho began to rally him, for having preached them a Sermon, too long for the present mode. Theophilus asked, whether it was not too long for him, and too close upon him and his author? - and was going to fay more. But Crito interposed, and would not allow any reflections on either fide. And, Pyrrbo having intimated that he had another appointment that evening, the company broke up for that time, after they had agreed to meet and go on the next ed sharing on paid, however, but a share to

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## PART I, DIALOGUE I.

A T the next meeting, Crito put them in mind, that Theophilus had already gone through his introductory work ;-having laid before them the nature of that Faith, which is required in the New Testament, and to which rewards are there annexed; and, on the contrary, the nature of that unbelief, which is there condemned, and threatened with great and exemplary punishment; and that, according to his account, the one was virtuous, and the other vicious; and therefore the one might be justly required and rewarded, and the other as rationally condemned and punished: Pyrrho's philosophical zeal was alarmed, and he was earnest to have mentioned to Theophilus a thousand plausible queries. But Crito proposed that Theophilus should have liberty, first to go through all his arguments; whereby (fays he to Pyrrbo) it is possible your objections may appear to be groundlesse, and you may have no occasion to propose them: or, if any of your difficulties remain with you, you shall have full liberty to speak in your turn, when you have heard all the arguments which Theophilus thall think proper to allege.

Pyrrbo agreed to reserve the principal objections till Theophilus had finished: but begged leave, now and then, to ask a question, with relation to some lesser things, which he should want to have cleared up, and which might wholly escape his memory, if he did not mention them while they were in his mind. They all thought that a very fair and reasonable request. And then Crito said, Theophilus, you have given us your account of the nature of Faith; be pleased, Sir, to procede to the (figs. part) of your design; and, according to your own proposal, "produce some of the principal argu-

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ments, which are to effect fuch a Faith." Theo. PART I. obilus began with faying that the arguments were many in number, and of great variety and extent; - that it would not be an easy matter to do justice to them in a narrow compasse. However he promised to be as concise as he was able. author, Pyrrho, has infinuated, in many parts of his book, that religion cannot be a rational thing. Now a rational religion is the only possible religion for mankind, who are rational creatures. An unreafonable religion (if fuch a thing were possible) could be fit only for brute beafts, for the horse or mule, which have no understanding. There may be ignorance or superstition without reason; but religion without reason is absurd and impossible.

The evidences of the truth of Christianity are either internal or external. And, tho' they all, in general, carry some force in them, yet it is sufficient if any one, or more, or even all of them united, produce in us that Faith which is required.

The internal evidences are such as these, viz. That The interboth the doctrines and precepts of Christianity (if we nal evitake the fcriptural account of them) are highly wife the truth and reasonable; that there is only one God; that of Christihe is a pure Spirit, and consequently invisible; that anity. he has almighty power, infinite knowlege and unerring wisdom; that he is eternal and immortal; The Chriand that (in one word) he is every way perfect :- fian docthat this great Being created the world, and con-fonable. tinually presides over it; supporting and preserving it in that order and regularity which we behold; that he is not only the Governor of all intelligent beings, but takes care of all the smallest and inferior creatures, and that none of them are below his notice, or thought unworthy of his constant regard; that he created man in his own image; and that, when mankind degenerated into ignorance, idolatry and vice, he fent among them his only-

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only-begotten and well-beloved Son, a person of great eminence and dignity; that, by his own bright example, and most familiar and excellent instructions, he might recover the world to the knowlege of the true God, and the practice of everlasting righteousnesse; that the Son of God, when he with this view appeared among men, chose a state of poverty, felf-denial and mortification to this world, neither feeking riches, temporal dominion or fenfual pleasures, but kept free from all fuspicion of such low and ignoble views; - that, notwithstanding the great opposition he met with, from the ignorance and prejudice, the malice and wickednesse of mankind, he unwearied. ly went about doing good, and rather submitted to facrifice his life, than deny, or betray, fuch imfortant truths as he had delivered ;- [ for, furely, no possible condescension could be too great, to promote the moral virtue and bappinesse of intelligent creatures, and recover a fallen race !] - that this great and eminent person was in a most remarkable manner rewarded for his extraordinary humiliation and fufferings, (which was honoring and rewarding virtue itself in the most virtuous and excellent person that ever appeared among men, and thereby in the strongest manner incouraging us to be virtuous:)-that, as by him God made the worlds, fo by him he now governs all things; that he will, at last, by him raise the dead, and confer rewards and punishments upon men, according as they have behaved: -Now are not all these things in themselves highly reasonable? It is evident that God makes us the daily ministers of good to one another, and chooses in this manner to govern the world, not immediately, but by the mediation of other intelligent beings. The mediatorial scheme, therefore, has nothing abfurd in it, but is most wife and reasonable esteen identify and vice, he tent among them his

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I forbear inlarging, for fear I should feem tedi- The moral ous; and therefore haften to the precepts, which precepts of must be acknowleged to be in all respects most the New Testament excellent, every way worthy of God, and futed reasonto recover fallen man to virtue and happinesse: - able. that we should love God above all, as he is the most perfect and amiable Being; that we should fear to offend him; that in all things we should chearfully fubmit to his will, as convinced of his perfect wisdom, goodnesse and power; that we should imitate his holinesse, or indeavor to be perfect as he is perfect; and carefully obey his commands, which are none of them grievous, but all holy, just and good; that we should worship him, who is a pure spirit, in spirit and truth, with pure and upright minds, with fincere repentance for our fins, and unfeigned resolutions of future obedience; that we should acknowlege our dependence upon God for the continuance of our very beings, and for all our mercies; that we should humbly confesse our fins before him, and implore his pardon of all we have done amisse; that we should petition him for every proper good, and to preserve us from every real evil; that we should pray to him, not for ourselves alone, but also for the rest of mankind; that we should celebrate his amiable perfections, and praise him for all his goodnesse to us and others; all which we are to do, not to inform God of any thing, as if he was ignorant, or to please him with the mention of his glorious perfections or actions, as if he loved to be flattered or complimented; or to move him to depart from his wife measures of governing all things.—But we are to pray to him and praise him, to bring our own minds to a proper temper for receiving from him whatever he sees convenient for us; and that

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FART I. we may behave towards him with all humility, affection, gratitude, reverence, submission and obedience; and in this way intirely confide in him for all the happinesse which is proper for us, or of which we ourselves are capable. That we should love our neighbor as ourselves, or (which is the fame thing) do unto others whatever we could reasonably desire that others, in like circumstances, should do unto us; that we should practife truth, justice, charity and beneficence in our conversation, and dealings, with men; thereby promoting the good of fociety, and adorning the doctrine of God our Savior in all things; that we should not follow the example either, of the great, or the many, to do evil; but make our good works fhine before others to provoke them to emulation, and to promote the fame laudable virtues in them; that we should not do injury to any, nor indulge (a) See Dr. our angry passions; (a) but if, at any time, we have injured or offended others, we should feek peace and reconciliation. That, if others affront or injure us, we should behave with great meeknesse, and bear injuries patiently, being ready to forbear and forgive our fellow-creatures, as we hope that God, through Christ, will have mercy upon us. Inftead of rendering evil for evil, we are to return good for evil, and fo strive to overcome them with kindnesse, and indeavor to carry our virtue to the greatest height.

As to felf-government. - We are taught that the things which defile a man, are not what the man eats or drinks, or to eat and drink with unwashed hands; but wicked thoughts breaking out into wicked words and actions; - these are the things which defile a man. Christianity recommends to us moderate affections with respect to the things of this world, and to feek first the kingdom of God and his righteousnesse, and to look upon all other

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things as accessories, which God will not fail to grant PART I. us, as far as he fees them proper for us. We are, therefore, with an humble, patient and contented mind to confide in the providence of God who oversees and directs all things. The duties of fobriety, temperance and chaftity, which are fo conducive to the welfare both of our bodies and minds, are frequently and earnestly recommended to us in the New Testament. And, besides the decorum we are to maintain in our outward behavior, we are to keep our hearts with all watchfulneffe, and regulate our thoughts and defigns, as well as external actions.

These are the highest improvements of moral virtue. And, by these excellent precepts, vast numbers even of the common people, when Chriflianity first appeared in the world, were brought off from idolatry, superstition and vice, and became remarkable for piety, felf-government and universal righteousnesse. And whoever will form his life according to these rules, will gain a complete victory over the world, and over all the irregular defires and appetites of flesh and sense;fuch a victory as the primitive Christians gained, and fuch as the best philosophers acknowlege their instructions did never effect.

But, besides the moral duties, which are of eter- The posinal, unchangeable obligation, the positive ordinances tive instiof the Christian religion were instituted as means Christiaand affiftances to preserve men stedfast in the prac-nity, reatice of those moral duties, which are unquestionably sonable. the weightier matters of the law; -and, even these positive institutions are so free from all appearance of superfitition and vanity, and so wisely fitted to the end for which they were defigned, that no man can justly or with any reason object against the things themselves, tho' against the corruptions and abuses of them there has been abundant reason to object.

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can pretend to fay that it is any way unreasonable or superstitious for every member of any particular society to be solemnly admitted into that society, by a plain and significant rite, intitling him to all the privileges, and charging him with all the obligations, which belong to the members of that society, as such;—which is the design of one of the Christian Sacraments? or that it is unreasonable and superstitious, frequently and with thankfulnesse to commemorate the love of their greatest benefactor, who condescended even to lay down his life for them; and thereupon humbly and solemnly to renew their obligations to him;—which is the design of the other?

I would now appeal to any fober and impartial man, whether this be not the most wife and excellent institution that can be thought of? Are not these moral virtues (which are the principal things in Christianity) the very things which all true philosophy has ever attempted to recommend? Could any thing be more worthy of God than giving men fuch a revelation, when men had confessedly corrupted themselves, and that to such a degree, that not only reason, or the light of nature, was altogether unlikely to restore true piety, but even that light itself (as Tully expressly acknowledged) did no where appear? Does not fuch a revelation highly conduce to the happinesse of mankind, if virtue be their dignity, perfection and happinesse, as it undoubtedly is? Let any one read, with seriousnesse and attention, our Savior's glorious fermon on the mount, and judge if it does not fet before his eyes fuch a lovely picture, fo exact a reprefentation, of true virtue, as Plato said, if it was a visible object, could not but charm men with the highest degree of love and admiration imaginable? Would not one be prejudiced in favor of a religion which abounds with fuch

fuch excellent moral precepts? Or, at least, not PART I. treat with fcorn and virulence a book which fo earneftly recommends what soever things are true, whatsoever things are venerable, what soever things are just, what soever things are pure, what soever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; every thing virtuous and every thing praise-worthy? One would think that among all the sincere friends of virtue, Christianity would meet with better quarter. For what wife precept was ever delivered by any Philosopher of any fect, which is not as plainly laid down by our Savior and his Apostles, and inforced with more ftrength and efficacy? What fystem of moral philosophy have we among all the celebrated antients, but what has some mixture of false rules or false principles? And all the excellent rules of piety and virtue were never collected fo fully and perfeetly, so free from all idle and superstitious opinions and weak or wicked practices, nor ever carried to fo noble a height, as in the New Testament. Surely, these must appear to be very considerable, internal marks of the truth of the Christian revelation; and it cannot, with any shadow of truth, be said not to be founded on argument; when it contains fo many things, which carry, in the very face of them, such incontestible marks of truth and goodnesse. May not obedience to fuch rules be very justly called our reasonable service? And would not every wife and good man be ready to receive it as a divine philosophy, and wish that as such it might be frequently read to the people, even though it had not such abundant external evidence that it was imparted unto the world by divine revelation?

As to the fanctions to these laws, or the motives The fancto induce men to comply with them; they are, tions of the likewise, every way wise and reasonable. Men are sonable. assured that upon repentance and amendment, they shall be forgiven all their transgressions; and that

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PART I. they shall be, in this life, supported and affished, as far as it is proper, in the faithful discharge of their duty. But the principal concern of man is in a future state; for there is a righteous judgment to come, when men shall be treated according to their characters; that, in order to be judged, the dead are to be raised, and the generation then living to be joined with them, and all mankind to fland at once before the judgment feat of Christ; that then the fecrets of all hearts shall be disclosed and every man receive according to his prevailing character, whether it has been good or bad; that God will judge the world with righteoufnesse, and nicely and exactly proportion rewards and punishments to the degree of every man's virtue or vice.-Now what is there in all this but what is truly rational? Is not the belief of a God and a providence, and of a future state, in itself highly reasonable? And were not these things acknowleged by the greatest and best Philosophers that ever lived? Must it not be owned to be a thing of unspeakable advantage to have that one important doctrine, of a future state, set before the eyes of the multitude, in the most clear and certain manner, without the fables and fictions of the Poets, and the doubts and disputations of the various sects of Philosophers? This does not deprive any thinking men of any of the arguments from the light of nature; but gives new force to all the arguments that were conclusive, and has fettled the minds of many, who could not go a great way in abstract reasoning. It is one thing to fee the reasonablenesse of this, when revelation has affured us that it is true, and thinking men have ranged and put in order the arguments, from reason also, to support and confirm this truth; and quite another thing to have found out fuch arguments, or to have placed them in so advantageous a light. And the common people,

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people, who are not accustomed to go far in ab. PART I. fract reasoning, have a great advantage in this respect by revelation. Let the beauty of virtue and its own intrinsic worth and excellence, and the basenesse and deformity of vice, be set in the strongest point of light, and have all the influence they can. Yet, when they are strengthened with the prospect of most exemplary punishment to the vicious and impenitent, and of a refurrection to eternal glory and happineffe to all pious and good persons; furely vice must appear a more foolish and abfurd choice, and virtue come more powerfully recommended.—Nor is there any the least inconfishency between these different sorts of arguments. -For the perfection of virtue, and the happinesse arising from that, is the grand reward of the imperfect, if prevailing, virtue of this state of trial, The doctrine, of a future state, seems to me to be fundamental, to all religion; and that there would not be fufficient support, in some given circumstances, unlesse there were sufficient arguments for a future state. And, though I apprehend the arguments from reason to be valid and conclusive, yet this grand principle is abundantly established and confirmed by the Christian revelation.

Such is the intrinsic worth and excellence of the Christian doctrine, in all these respects, that one would be ready to ask, "what occasion could there be for any external attestation, from property possible or miracle, to prove such a doctrine as this?" Would it not have been sufficient to have proposed such a rational and excellent scheme of religion to mankind, and lest it to have made its own way, by virtue of its usefulnesse, worth and excellence? But God considered the great weaknesse and inveterate prejudices, the vice and inattention of mankind, and (as expecting little successe from the bare proposal of this most excel-

PART I. lent inflitution) he added the fignal atteflation of prophely and miracles, to awaken attention to things of the highest importance. But this leads me to the external evidences, which I am prepared to lay before you. However, as they are many, and of great extent and variety, I would ask you whether you choose that I should now procede? Both Pyrrho and Crito faid that they had hitherto made but a fmall progresse; and, being willing to bring the whole matter to as fpeedy a conclusion as they could, they defired Theophilus to take his own way The exter- and procede as foon as he pleased. Upon which he intimated that he would fum up the external evi-Christiani- dences of the truth of Christianity under the two heads of prophefy and miracles. I will begin (fais he) with that of prophefy; but cannot give you any more than a summary view of this part of the argument.-When man fell from his innocence, God dence from promised mercy to the penitent, and intimated that, though fin and mifery had then taken place, virtue and happinesse should at last prevail and triumph ;in that figurative form of expression, the seed of the avoman shall bruise the serpent's head. This, I think has, by fome late authors, been shown to be the

meaning of the words, and what our first parents would eafily and naturally understand by them in fuch circumstances. But, as this to many may now appear to be an abscure way of speaking, I will fay no more concerning that prophefy; but procede to fuch as are more plain and literal. God made

with Abraham an everlasting covenant, and promised

that in him and in his feed all nations of the earth should

be bleffed. That covenant was renewed to Isaac and Ifrael. Again; it was prophefied that the seeptre

should not depart from Judah, - till Shilo came; - by

whom the antient Jews understood the Meffiab. And some of the later prophets allude to that pre-

diction and give light to it. Moses foretold that

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the Lord their God would raise unto Israel, a prophet, PART I. from among their brethren, like unto him; unto whom they were to bearken, or God would require it of them. Now, as he was to be a prophet like unto Moses, he must also be a lawgiver, which none of the succeding prophets were. For there arose not in Israel, from that time till the coming of Jesus, a prophet like unto Moses, &c. And they, who did not hearken unto Fesus, were punished in an exemplary manner at the destruction of Ferusalem. God affured King David that his bouse, his throne and his kingdom should be established for ever. And there are many other intimations, that the grand promise, made unto the family of Abraham, and afterwards limited to Isaac, Israel and Judab, should be yet farther limited to the house of David. There are, in the book of Psalms, direct prophefies of Christ, particularly Ps. cx. which speaks of his great and extensive dominion.

The prophet Isaiab hath so many and such expresse predictions, relating to our Lord and his Gospel, that he hath been frequently called the evangelical prophet. I will mention a few of his predictions. He comforts the Jews in their afflicted flate with foretelling the accomplishment of the grand promise made to the house of David, unto us (sais he) a child is born, unto us a son is given; the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called wonderful counsellor, [or, as the LXX are faid to read the words, the angel of the great counsel, called by Malachi, the angel of the covenant, the mighty God, the everlasting father, [or as we are told again, the LXX have it, the father of the age to come, as the Gospel age, in Jewish language, was commonly called; the prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice, from benceforth even for ever. And that this is a prophelie, is plain from the concluding words, the zeal of the

PART I. Lord of hosts will perform this. Isaiab hath also a prophefy, which will give light to that already mentioned, concerning the sceptre not departing from Judah, &c. and other preceding prophesies; for he foretells that a rod would come out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch grow out of his roots; that the spirit of the Lord should rest upon bim, and that he would govern with the greatest justice and mercy, And again; he declares that this root of Jeffe was to stand for an ensign of the people [of Israel,] and unto it shall the Gentiles seek. After that, he, in the most beautiful, figurative language, describes the peace and love which the Gospel would promote, if men would live according to its laws, the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, &c. If, xi. 6, &c. And that the kingdom of Christ was to be a spiritual kingdom, is often and plainly intimated, for then the earth was to be full of the knowlege of the Lord, as the waters fill the channels of the sea. The livid chapter of Isaiah, likewife, foretells the fufferings of Christ and the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and contains so clear and expresse, so literal and evident a prophefy of our Savior, and was fo remarkably accomplished in him, that it is said greatly to have conduced to bring over feveral Jews to the Christian faith. And it cannot, without violent wresting and perverting the words, be applied either to the nation of Israel in general, or to any other particular person, but Jesus of Nazareth. The prophet Feremiab did also prophety, with a plain allusion to former predictions, I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In those days Shall Judah be saved and Israel dwelt safely. And this is bis name wherewith he shall be called, the Lord our righteousnesse. Ezekiel spoke thus, likewise, in the name of the Lord, I will fet up one sheepherd over

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them and be shall feed them, even my servant David. PART I. He shall feed them, and he shall be their sheepherd. And I will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it (a). Jesus, the (a) See a descendent of David, is here prophesied of, under like prothe name of David; just as some have observed phesy, concerning Virgil, who pretending to prophefy of fu- 4, 5. ture, contingent events, fais, there shall then be another Tiphys and another ship Argos, and the great Achilles shall again be sent to Troy. There are prophesies of the Gospel's spreading among the Gentiles; It is a light thing (fais God) that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, and that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth. And again; out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; be shall judge among the nations. The Lord alone shall be exalted that day, and the idols of the beathen be shall utterly abolish. The prophet Daniel has several remarkable prophesies. I shall, at present, take notice of one or two. I faw in the night visions, (sais he) and behold one like the son of man came with the clouds of beaven, and came to the antient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given bim dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve bim. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and bis kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. It has been well observed that, with a constant allusion to this prophesy, Jesus stiled himself the son of man. And, because he is here described as coming in the clouds of beaven and baving universal dominion; the Jews, who wanted a temporal prince, to rule over all the nations of the earth, might possibly desire of Jesus a sign from beaven, to prove him to be such a Messab as they expected. But the time was not then come for his having that extensive power and dominion, with which

PART I. which he is now invested, and with which he will appear, in the clouds of beaven, at his second and

most glorious appearance.

The 9th text explained. Dan. ix. 24. &c.

Daniel's famous prophefy of the 70 weeks contains a good argument in favor of Christianity. For, according to the most learned and profound calculations, it was exactly accomplished. And, if the See p. 20. adversaries of revelation would destroy the force of this argument; let them show, by just criticism and exact calculations, that events did not correspond, as learned Christians have attempted to prove, and (as they apprehend) have actually proved. Pyrrho faid, that his author, p. 20, &c. had excepted against all ingenious applications of mysterious prophesies and their references, as things that, in his opinion, are never to be mentioned as arguments, in behalf of a truth destined to be universally received. After which he takes notice of some late calculations of Daniel's weeks, &c. To which Theophilus replied, he was aware of that caution, and therefore had chiefly infifted upon plain and expresse predictions, as least liable to exception, and as affording the clearest and strongest arguments in favor of Jesus and his Gospel. if, by mysterious prophesies, sais he, you understand predictions, which relate to other events, and can be applied to Jesus, only in a secondary sense; all these I give up, as either representing parallel cases, or as the words may be used merely by way of allufion, or accomodation; but as no prophefies of Tesus,—ever to be mentioned as arguments or means of conviction, in behalf of the truth of the Gospel. I have alleged many literal and direct prophesies, which belong to Jesus, and to him alone; and there are many others which might be alleged, if I had time; - fuch as Jesus's coming before the second temple was destroyed; the prophesy of his fore-runner, and the like. And, suppose there be some prophesies which do, really and in their original meaning,

meaning, relate to the Meffiah, or the Gospel dif. PART I. pensation, and yet we cannot clearly make them out;-it must be remembered that they have not yet, all of them, received their full accomplishment; and therefore it is impossible to allege the facts that correspond to some of them; because they are not yet come to passe. Besides, such obscure prophesies do not in the least weaken the proof arising from those which are clear, literal and direct. Again; it has been very justly observed (a) that prophesies are like mythological, or fatirical writings, where the meaning is partly discovered and partly concealed. In which case, when a man finds the moral, or defign, to which the parts in general agree, he is fully fatisfied that he has hit upon the true meaning. In like manner; though one or two prophelies, confidered by themselves, may not so evidently appear, at first view, to relate to the Gospel dispensation; yet, when a whole series of prophelies, for a fuccession of many hundreds, or some thousands, of years, all in general center in one point, and agree to one thing, we may be as rationally fatisfied that we have hit upon their original intention. A man might have been born at Bethlebem, of the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David, and yet not have been the Messiah. Meshab must have such circumstances applicable to him, as well as all the other prophetic characters, otherwise he could have had no just claim to be

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<sup>(</sup>a) See Bp. Butler's Analogy, &c. p. 251. If the meaning were not partly obscured, who could suppose that the Church of Rome would acknowled the book of the Revelation to be canonical? as it is, one is ready to wonder at their receiving a book, which so directly foretold their cruelty and other corruptions. The like might be observed concerning the Jews receiving the writings of the Old Testament, which bear such testimony to Christ, and so clearly prophesy of their being in their present state, in consequence of their sins. The evidence of persons testifying against themselves, is very considerable.

PART I. that extraordinary person. Now that such a number of distinct prophesies, for such a long succession of ages, should all center in one person, or one defign, could never have happened by chance; nor could fuch events have been foretold, without a fpirit of prophefy. We may therefore be fully and rationally fatisfied that the predictions were intended to describe the very events which so exactly corres-

pond to them.

I could very justly have argued from the prophefies relating to many kingdoms and nations, fuch as those which speak of the ten tribes of Israel being carried into their captivity, never to return and fertle as a kingdom; the return of Judah after feventy years captivity in Babylon; the overthrow of the cities and nations, which furrounded the Jews, fuch as Egypt, Edom, Moab, Tyre, Ninive and Babylon; which learned men have shown to be so punctually accomplished, according to all history, facred or profane, that nothing could have been more remarkable. And, in all cases, it appears to me, that the more antiquity is studied, and know. lege, and true, folid learning abounds, the more proofs and confirmations are discovered of the truth of Revelation. And it is one glorious, oblique consequence of Christianity, that the study of that has kept alive the learning of the antients and made it flourish. And they appear to me as barbarous as the Goths, or Vandals, who contend that no antient histories deserve credit, and that nothing is to be believed but what falls under our own fenfes. Such persons must be as much enemies to all learning, as they are to Revelation. However, as learning is against them, it is no wonder that they are against learning. For it is by learned inquiries that the famous city Babylon is now known to have been destroyed many ages ago, as the antient prophets foretold, and is

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become pools of water and an utter defolation. See Is. PART I. xiv. 23. Jer. 1. 39, 40, So likewife, Egypt was prophefied of, Ezek. xxix. 15. as what should become the basest of kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations; for I will diminish them (faith the Lord God) that they shall no more rule over the nations. And learned men can eafily show that Egypt is now, and has been for many ages, in this abject condition. It was, likewife, prophesied of Tyre, that famous mart of the east, Ezek. xxvi. 14. I will make thee like the top of a rock. Thou shalt be a place to spread nets in, thou shalt be built no more, for I the Lord have spoken it. Remarkable to this purpose are the words of Maundrell, a traveller of established credit, p. 48, 49. who, describing the present state of the antient glorious and celebrated city of Tyre, fais, " on the north fide, it has an " old Turkish, ungarrisoned castle; besides which " you see nothing here, but a mere Babel of bro-" ken walls, pillars, vaults, &c. there being not " so much as one intire house left. Its present in-" habitants are only a few poor wretches, harbour-" ing themselves in the vaults and sublisting chiefly " on fishing; who seem to be preserved in this " place by divine providence, as a visible argu-" ment, how God has fulfilled his word concerning " Tyre, viz. That it should be as the top of a rock, " a place for filbers to dry their nets in, Ezek. " xxvi, 14."

I might also take notice of the propheties concerning Ninive's becoming a desolation, and show how exactly bistory confirms these,—there being no trace of it now remaining, neither is it known where it stood. The famous prophety in Daniel, concerning the four grand monarchies, the Affrian, Persian, Gracian and Roman; and that under the last of these the God of beaven would set up a kingdom, that should stand for ever, &c.—might be alleged as ano-

ther

PART I. ther argument in favor of Revelation. For it is aftonishing how exactly events have agreed to these predictions. And it may and ought to be observed that these prophesies were delivered long before the events came to passe, and there is no foundation for fo much as any suspicion that they were forged afterwards. The Jews, who are the professed enemies of the Christian religion, bear witnesse to the antiquity and genuinenesse of the books of the Old Testament. And as to the sense, in which we understand the prophesies, we desire no more than that persons would study the prophets, as they do any other antient writings; and try in that way whether the prophesies do not exactly describe the events to which we apply them, and likewise fee whether any other events can correspond to them in every particular.

As to the predictions concerning the Messals, they were so famous that the coming of Christ was, in general, expected among the Jews, about the time that Jesus appeared; so that the calculations were then so far understood even by the common people. And the Roman authors have also taken notice, that an antient and constant opinion had spread all over the east, and was believed by many; nay and was likewise upon record in the antient books of the priests; that about that time the east should prevail, and some coming out of Indea should obtain the empire, or dominion of the

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world.

If your author means that no arguments are to be taken from the propheses, or that none of them are to be mentioned as means of conviction, in behalf of a truth destined to be universally received,—He ought to be told that he may keep that to himself as his own opinion, if he thinks proper. But those, who are for a rational religion, and apprehend that Christianity is founded on argument, do not care that he should prescribe to them, or direct them what arguments

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guments to use, or what to let alone. The strong-Part I. est and best arguments are most troublesome to an adversary, and the omission of such would best answer his purpose.—As to the common people's seeing the force of such an argument, that must be according to their capacities. Some of them will be able to understand it, though they could not have of themselves sound it out; and others will never be able to see much of its force. But let the arguments of all kinds be fairly stated, and as to those who are able to receive them, let them receive them. The same arguments may not convince all; but there are a number of other plain arguments to convince such persons as cannot persectly judge of this.

But the prophesies of the Old Testament are not all. Our Lord and his Apostles have expresly predicted many things, which either have been, or are now accomplished. Such were their predictions concerning the swift and incredible successe of the Gospel; which, like a small seed, was to shoot up to a confiderable stalk and a great many spreading branches; or like a little leaven quickly to diffuse itself through the whole lump; or which, without a figure, was in a little time to be preached unto all nations. And the event foon verified the predictions. There are prophefies, also, concerning the long duration of Christianity in the world, which we, who live about 1700 years after, see verified among ourselves. And this is one of the evidences for Christianity, which increases in proportion to the distance of time from the first mention of the prediction.

There are propheses both in the Old and New Testament concerning the state of the Jewish nation, which are too considerable ever to be omitted, among the arguments for Revelation. Before that people were settled in Canaan, Moses foretold them,

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PART I. Prophefies concerning the present state of the Fews.

Deut. xxviii. 15; 25. If thou wilt not bearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, it shall come to passe that thou shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. And Lev. xxvi. 31, &c. I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries into desolation; and your enemies, who shall dwell therein, shall be aftenished at it; and I will scatter you among the beathen. And yet for all that (v. 44, 45.) when they shall be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away; neither will I abbor them to destroy them utterly s-but I will, for their sakes, remember the covenant of their ancestors. It is, in other places, foretold that God would scatter them among all people from the one end of the earth even unto the other. But that, when they should return unto the Lord their God, he would have compassion on them, and gather them from all nations whither he had scattered them;—that, though other nations should be ashamed and confounded, all of them, yet Israel should be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and should not be asbamed or confounded world without end. And remarkable are the words, Jer. xxx. 11. where God fais to Ifrael, though I make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered you, yet will I not make a full end of you. Which is repeted, chap. xlvi. 28. There are other places, where it is foretold that they shall be planted on their own (a) N. B. land, and shall no more be pulled out of the land which There are God has given them. See Amos ix. 15. And that the feed of Ifrael shall not cease from being a nation for ever, Jer. xxxi. 36-(a). In confirmation of these antient predictions, our Savior foretold that the Fews should be carried captive into all nations; and that Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, Luke xxi, 24. and St. Paul

prophelied, Rom. xi. 25, &c. of the same calami-

ration. Now, need I to observe that the Jews have

remained these 1500 years, just in such a situation

a number more of like prophelies. which I have, for the fake of brevity, omitted; but which ties upon the Jewish nation, and of their final restoare very remarkable.

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as was predicted, Deut. xxviii. 37. Thou shalt become PART I. an astonishment, a proverb and a by-word, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee? See also Jer. xxiv. 9. and xxix. 18.—Are they not even now in a flate of dispersion and their land a desolation or inhabited by strangers? Do they not many of them live among us? And, considering them in all their wide and various dispersions, are they not a very numerous people? And, in this one thing, they differ from all the antient kingdoms, which oppressed their ancestors, that they continue a distinct people unto this day: And neither the most cruel nor kind treatment can make them mix with the other nations. This has fo much the appearance of a flanding miracle, in favor of revelation, that it deserves great regard. It cannot be said, with any shadow of truth, that these prophesies have been forged after the events, or that they are not fulfilled by incontestible, correspondent facts. (b) How "aftonishing is it that the Jews, our very (b) See " enemies in religious matters, preserve, with so Dr. Sykes's " much fidelity, the books which afford fo many aion, &c. " arguments in favor of Christianity; -- books con- p. 195. " fessedly wrote many ages before Christ; and " which so severely condemn their vices, and point " out their reproach, in affording us fuch a num-" ber of prophesies of their being in their present " unhappy circumstances, in consequence of their " transgressions? And how much more surprizing " still, that the state of things should be such in " all Christian nations, that the Jews may with " ease return to their own land, when the times of " the Gemiles shall be fulfilled? For, very numerous " as they are, yet they are without dominion, or " property, any where, I mean fuch as may de-" tain them in any country; and they are pre-" vented by almost all nations from purchasing " lands of inheritance."-How would the enemies

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PART I. of revelation triumph, could they offer one fuch clear and incontestible argument against it, as these predictions, compared with the present state of the Jews, afford for it? I must leave every one to judge as the argument appears to him. But I must confesse that, as to myself, the present state of the Jews appears to contain an argument, in savor of Christianity, of unspeakable force and energy.

Prophefies concerning Popery, &c.

Several authors of great name, and above all the incomparable Sir Isaac Newton, a person of the cooleft head, and one of the most learned, dillgent and unprejudiced of mankind, hath collected another fett of prophesies, answered by some remarkable events; and hath shewn a surprizing harmony therein between Daniel and the Revelation, St. Paul prophesied of a man of fin, who should si in the temple of God, the very Christian Church itself, and exalt bimself above all that is called God, every earthly prince, or magistrate, plainly shewing (whatever he may pretend) that he himself is really a God, or temporal potentate. His coming was to be after the working of Satan, with all figns and lying wonders, and all the deceit of unrighteousnesse; - which would prevail among those who had not the love of truth, but took pleasure in unrighteousnesse. Again; the spirit (faith the same Apostle) speaketh expressly that, in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving beed to seducing spirits and dostrines of Demons, speaking lies in hypocrify, baving their consciences seared with an bot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God bath created to be received with thanksgiving, of those who believe and know the truth. St. John hath also prophesied of a tyrannical power, under the image of a wild beaft, to whom was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and power was given bim to continue forty-two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, and those that dwell

dwell in beaven; and it was given bim to make war PART I. with the faints and overcome them; and power was given bim over all kindreds, nations and tongues. And all that dwell on the earth shall worship bim; and be that exerciseth his power before him, -doth great wonders,—and deceiveth those that dwell on the earth, by means of the miracles which he had power to do; and be bath power to give life to the image of the beaft,and to cause all, both great and small, rich and poor, bond and free, to receive a mark in their foreheads, and that no man might buy, or sell, save be that had the mark. And again, he represents this tyrannical power under another image, viz. that of an adulterous woman, sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast,-full of names of blasphemy; - being arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls; baving a golden cup in her band, fall of abominations and of the filthinesse of her fornication. And St. John faw upon her forehead the following name, written in legible characters, Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of barlots, and of the abominations of the earth. And he, with unspeakable astonishment, law the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus. And the angel, that was fent to explain the vision, told him that the kings of the earth would have one mind, and give their power and strength unto the beast; and that people and nations, and multitudes and tongues would submit to that power, — till the words of God should be fulfilled. It was, likewise, foretold that by ber sorceries all nations would be deceived; and that such would be her persecuting spirit, and her great and matchlesse cruelty, that in her would be found the blood of prophets and of faints, and of all that were unjustly flain upon the earth. And, that we might be at no losse where to find the seat of that tyrannical power, it is expressly said to be the great city, that flood upon seven bills, and which then reigned over the kings

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PART I. kings of the earth. When Theophilus had cited these prophefies, he, with an unufual ardor, faid to Pyrrho. -That a doctrine fo reasonable in itself, and which abounds with fuch excellent morals, should have also such forcible and striking external attestations, is furely a very remarkable thing; and amounts already to fuch a degree of evidence as I know not how you can resist it. Here is (faid he) a most fignal event foretold by the apostles of Jesus, many ages before it came to passe; - an event the like to which had never happened from the creation of the world to that time, and most probably there never will happen fuch another; an event which was out of the reach of all humane conjecture and fore-fight; and yet we, who live almost 1700 years after the prediction, can easily point to facts which exactly answer to these prophesies. You call us credulous for believing upon these and other as strong evidences, but pray let me defire you, Pyrrbo, to account for such clear and expresse predictions being verified by fuch incontestible events. This is not a mere ingenious application of mysterious propheses, or an application wholly groundleffe and imaginary; -any more than that of those already mentioned, which relate to the dispersion of the Jows and their present remarkable circumstances. But here are various and expresse predictions, answered by plain and well known facts. Neither entbufialts nor impoftors could have possibly foretold such uncommon events, fo exactly and fo many ages before they came to passe. Nor can we, who have lived to fee so much of the accomplishment, describe this grand apostasy of the Church of Rome, in a more lively, concise, or emphatical manner, than the apostles have done in their predictions. The principal arguments for the truth of Christianity are facts, of which a man of plain, common fense may be judge. And here is an evident and notorious fact, eafily

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easily known to all that will attend. All bistory PART I. for many ages is full of it, and we need only open our eyes, and we may behold too much of it. The man of fin is now upon his throne. The city of Rome is the feat of his dominion. He fitteth in the temple of God, the very Christian Church itself. The Pope exalteth himself above the kings of the earth, who are many of them subject to his decrees, as well as vast numbers of people and multitudes, and nations and tongues. He pretends to miracles, and boasts of lying wonders without number. He makes use of all the deceivablenesse of unrighteousnesse, and makes converts among those who have not the love of the truth, but take pleafure in unrighteousnesse, and desire to be made easy in their vices. He pretends to spiritual dominion, but is really a God, a mere temporal potentate, and supports himself by force and policy, like other temporal princes. He has departed from the faith, giving heed to feducing spirits and doctrines of demons; - promoting the worship of angels and departed faints ;-forbidding the Clergy, and the Friars, Monks, and Nuns to marry; (a)and commanding all Papifts to abstain from certain forts of meat in Lent, and on certain days of the year besides. As to the Church of Rome's being fond of mysteries, intoxicating the nations with the

<sup>(</sup>a) "Could St. Paul's faying that Christians should depart from the faith in this particular way, be any cause or occation that they should do what was so severely condemned? Had he not condemned these practices, it might be said that these propheses were the occasions of them. But, as he speaks so precisely against them, and condemns them who came into these practices, as departing from the faith, the prophesy was not the reason of men's actions, in order to make it accomplished; but was a real prediction of future events, out of the reach of humane conjecture." See Dr. Sykes's Connection, &cc. p. 196. The like observation holds with respect to the other propheses, here mentioned.

PART I. cup of her superstition, and a blind, implicite faith: deceiving them with ber forceries, fuch as bulls, pardons, indulgences, difpensations, absolutions, and the like; whereby she pretends to make them very religious and secure of heaven, without an holy, virtuous life; fo likewife, as to her indeavoring to hinder all from buying and felling, but fuch as have the proper mark, or will be subject to her dominion, - and her perfecuting the faints and shedding the blood of the martyrs;—they are so notorious, that they need only to be mentioned. Indeed, if these things had not been foretold, good Christians might have been shocked at them. But now the very corruptions of Christianity become an argument in proof of its divine original, Can it be faid that Christianity is not founded on Argument, when so many and such cogent arguments may be offered in support of it? Or were all these arguments afforded for mere amusement, and to be rendered quite unnecessary by I do not know what enthusiastic notion of every particular person's being inspired, and that Faith is wrought in them by the spirit, without the scriptures, or without any argument or rational evidence at all? Will you, or your author, Pyrrho, pretend to fay that these prophesies were forged after the events, or have no relation to them? Your author, indeed, p. 61. has infinuated, that the tradition of a miracle detracts, by length of time, from its divine authority. If miracles were handed down by oral tradition, I agree (a) See with him that that would be the case. (a) But, when books are written by the persons, to whom the revelation was made, and before, or by whom feveral of the miracles were worked, there the probability doth not decrease in the same proportion. For what is handed down by oral tradition

is foon corrupted or loft. But books sublisting many hundred years, the probability grounded on

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Dr. Sykes's Connedion, &c. p. 208.

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them is the same as if the writers themselves existed PART L. all that time, and retained an exact memory of the facts, without any alteration whatever, as long as the books are extant. Such is the evidence we have for miracles. (b) And, in the case of a series (b) See also of propheses, relating to events in all future ages, P. 134the evidence is constantly increasing, as the events fucceffively happen. This, therefore, is a growing evidence; and we, who live at this distance of time, may fee the force of this argument, which to the primitive Christians was no argument at all; tho' they had miracles done before their eyes, and other arguments which we have not. as all the prophesies are not yet accomplished, this fort of evidence will by length of time be continually increasing, till all the words of God shall be fulfilled, which will (most probably) open such a scene, as to clear up and explain the whole feries of prophefy, both in the Old Testament and the New, and draw the attention and admiration of the (c) See Sir whole earth (c).

Pyrrho feemed a little disturbed at Theophilus's Newton ardor, and his putting such close questions to him. on Daniel, But he had two very plausible answers ready. The &c. p.252. one was, that Crito had ordered him not to speak till Theophilus had finished; and he said he would keep order and observe the directions of their president. The other was, that they had been a long time ingaged that evening already, and he believed the company would think it high time to break up:—To which last proposal they all assented, and

so departed till the next evening.

DIALOGUE

## DIALOGUE II.

PART I. THEN all the company were come together again, and had taken their places, Pyrrbo, with a fmile and an air of ridicule, called upon The opbilus to give them another lecture. For he longed for his concluding that he might have leave to mention his numberleffe objections and difficulties. Theophilus, observing the air and manner of his pronouncing the words, faid, " Pyrrbo, if you are tired e with hearing me, or my arguments become " troublesome to you, I will soon relieve you and of procede no further." Pyrrbo was ashamed to have drawn him in fo far and then prevent his going through, and was afraid they would rally him for breaking off the conversation, as one that could not fland it, when closely attacked ;-and therefore he begged pardon and defired him to go on. Crito likewife faid that, for his part, he thought they could not imploy their time better, or more

The evi-Miracles.

I am now going (fais he) to the other grand dence from external atteffation of the truth of Christianity, viz. that of miracles. And I hope that the argument arifing from these will not appear lesse cogent, of lesse considerable. Befides the miracles, worked by Moses and the antient prophets, who foretold the coming of the Meffah, JESUS CHRIST himself worked many miracles, and appealed to them as evidences of the truth of his mission, and that he troduction delivered unto men what he had received of his to the Cre- father. (a) With that view he turned water into dibility of wine; once and again fed with a few loaves and fishes vast numbers of people in desert places; walked upon the fea; calmed the winds and the p. 8, &c. waves; gave fight to the blind, hearing to the deaf.

agreeably ;-upon which Theophilus proceded to the

next argument, as he had proposed.

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(a) See Mr. Lardner's Inthe Gospel History Part. II.

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deaf, speech to the dumb, soundnesse and strength to the lame, the maimed and fuch as were bowed down; healed diseases of all forts, even the most inveterate, and fuch as were reckoned otherwise incurable; restored to their right minds demoniacs or lunatics, and even raised the dead. miracles were performed at his word, in an instant, and some were worked on persons at a distance from him. They were done by him in the most public and open manner; at Jerusalem and in every part of Judea and Galilee; in cities, in villages, in fynagogues and private houses, in the streets and in the high ways, in the fields and in the wildernesse, by sea and by land; upon a great many Tews, and upon some few Gentiles, before Scribes and Pharifees and rulers of the synagogues; when he was attended fometimes by a few persons, but generally before great multitudes; in the presence of unbelievers and enemies, as well as of believers and friends; \_notwithstanding what your author has faid to the contrary, p. 48. and it was not, till The 10th after he had established his divine mission, by work-text exing several of these miracles, that he is said to have Mark vii. taught as one having authority, i. e. as one who had 29. See p. proved that he derived his instructions from heaven 36, 37. and had a right to dictate, as a person evidently fent from God. See Mat. iv. 24. compared with Mat. vii. 29. and accordingly it is expressly faid, Luke iv. 32. and they were aftonished at his doctrine; for his word was with power.

The Apostles, the common people, all mankind are able to reason so far, as to conclude that no man could do such things unlesse God were with him and assisted him in an extraordinary manner. how can it be faid that Christianity is not founded on Argument, or that Jesus had no thought of procuring disciples by his miracles, [as the author intimates, P. 49. and in many other places, when Fesus did

openly

openly work such miracles, and once and again appealed to them, as clear proofs that the Futher bad sent him? For the works which the Father bad given him power to do, they bore witnesse of him. And, therefore, though several of the Jews would not believe him, who was a person of the greatest veracity, upon his own bare word, yet he advised them to believe him for the sake of the works which he did, that they might know and believe that the Father had sent him, and bore witnesse of him. This was a rational and strong argument, and must have had great weight with all sober and considerate persons.

Nay, further; Jesus not only worked miracles himself in great abundance, but he indued the Apostles with a power of working miracles, and sent them out to preach and exercise that power. his behavior, during all these things, was almost as remarkable as the miracles themselves. For, while God thus glorified him, he lived in a mean condition, without any external pomp and fplendor, and was exceding meek and condescending in his behavior towards his disciples and all others, who reforted to him for instruction or relief; -at the same time freely declaring to all their duty; impartially correcting the faults and failings of his disciples, and with a true prophetic resolution and intrepidity reproving the hypocrify, pride, ambition and covetousnesse, the false maxims and vain traditions, not only of the multitude, but of the Scribes and Pharifees, and of the greatest men in the Jewish nation both in church and state.

But, besides all the evidences he gave, during his life, he frequently referred to a more remarkable and greater evidence, which should be given after his death, viz. his own resurrection from the dead, and such an effusion of the Spirit as had never been communicated to mankind. To prepare them for this extraordinary evidence, he foretold to his

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Apostles, frequently, expressly, and with many cir- PART I. cumstances, that he should die a violent death at Jerusalem, but that he should be raised again the third day. And, notwithstanding he knew when the time of his fufferings was to be, and forefaw the cruel treatment, which he should then and there undergo, he did not decline going up to Jerusalem, at that paffover; nor would he use his power to make a miraculous escape, or resistance. No; he was willing to feal his doctrine with his blood, and to be as exemplary in his death as he had been in his life; teaching his followers to fuffer with the truth, rather than betray or give it up, and that life itself is no longer valuable than it is confiftent with truth and the practice of righteousnesse. He died, therefore, as a martyr, and thereby witneffed a good confession; and he was cut off, but not for himself, giving his soul an offering for sin, and facrificing his very life to redeem men from iniquity and to bring in everlasting righteousnesse. His fufferings and death were very public, for these things were not done in a corner. The Jewish Sanbedrim, the leading men in that nation, were his accusers. Pontius Pilate, the chief Roman magistrate in that country tried and condemned him, at the clamorous importunity of the Jews, though he declared him innocent. And he was crucified near one of the gates of Jerusalem, at the common place of execution, between two malefactors;—when that great city was full of people, and at the time of that high festival, the passover;—and thousands flocked out of the city to be spectators of his death, During his last sufferings, there were some remarkable testimonies given to his innocence and dignity: There was a darknesse of three hours continuance over the whole land of Judea; the veil of the temple was rent afunder from the top to the bottom; the earth trembled and the rocks were rent ;- from which H 2

PART I. which attestations the Roman officer, who attended

the execution, became a convert, or concluded, verily this was the Son of God! The power and malice of his enemies were to great that we may be fatile fied they would take care to fee him quite dead. And they, likewife, took all the precautions they could to prevent his coming to life again. For they well knew he had declared that within three The refur- days be should rife again. But, notwithstanding the utmost precautions of his enemies, who had at their fervice all the power and authority of that country, early in the morning on the third day from his crucifixion and burial, he actually came to life Now a refurrection from the dead being again. an event of fo uncommon and furprizing a nature, and withal fo strong an evidence in his favor; and, as the Apostles were chosen of God to be witnesses of this grand fact to the world, they were appointed to live with him, for some time, before his death; that they might be perfectly acquainted with him, and not mistake another person, for Jesus come to life again, [as the body of the Jewish nation might possibly have been suspected to have done; fuppose he had appeared as publicly after his refurrection, as before his death; and they had all acknowleged him to be the Christ, See the infimuations of the author, p. 68.] The Apostles were fully convinced (as multitudes both of his friends and enemies were) that he was actually dead and buried. They knew that a refurrection from the dead was a possible thing to the power of God; and, in the case of so innocent and extraordinary a person's being fo very unjustly put to death, it was no unreasonable thing to expect fome uncommon vindication of his character. There is fomething in human nature which creates an horror at the very thoughts of feeing a dead person come to life again.—To prepare the Apostles, therefore, to attend to the

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rection of Christ, a remarkable evidence.

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evidences of his resurrection, and that with due PART I. care and composure of mind, he had not only foretold his death and refurrection frequently before he fuffered, but after he rose again he discovered himfelf gradually and by flow and eafy fteps. ftone was rolled away from the mouth of the tomb; the fepulchre was found open and the body gone. An angel, in the most friendly and familiar manner, tells one of the women, who was come to the sepulchre, to look after the body, that Jesus was rifen. Afterwards he himself appeared to her, but took on him the form of another person, and discovered himself gradually. He ordered her to go and tell the Apostles; but, when she told them, they gave very little credit to what she said. However, two of them ran in great surprize and with an eager curiofity to the sepulchre, to see what further discoveries they could make; and, by all the figns and tokens they could observe, the resurrection of Tefus appeared not improbable. Then Fefus appeared unto others of the Apostles company, and fent a like message by them, viz. that he was rifen from the dead and they should see bim. Again; he joined in company with two of the disciples going to Emmaus, but appeared at first in the form and habit of a stranger and traveller, and afterwards gradually discovered himself to them. And, when he had, by these and other appearances, sufficiently prepared the Apostles for the greatest attention, he appeared unto ten of them; and after that to all the eleven; repeting his visits, once and again, and that during the space of forty days. Nay, by a folemn and repeted appointment, he appeared unto above five hundred of his disciples, upon a mountain in Galilee, by which he fully convinced them all, though some had formerly doubted (a). most

(a) Mat. xxviii. 17. & Se edictacar But some doubted.] As this was one of the last appearances which Jesus made before his ascension;

PART I most of these five hundred disciples, who had this full and intire fatisfaction, lived many years after, to bear their testimony to this grand fact. They had known him very well before he died. The Apostles, in particular, must have known him intimately; for they had lived with him as his family or constant attendants. And, after his resurrection. they faw him again. They knew his face, his air, his stature, his voice, his looks, and all those features, marks and lineaments which diffinguished him from other men. They talked to him, after his rifing from the dead, and heard him talk, in his usual voice and manner, and upon a variety of fubjects, about which they had frequently conversed, before his death. They eat with him and faw him eat. Nay they felt and handled his body, and had all possible fatisfaction that it was no spectre, nor apparition, no imposture, nor delusion. were well fatisfied it was not another man, but their very Lord and Master himself, come to life again;

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ascension; it is utterly improbable that he should leave any room for doubting, or that the E-wangelift should intimate any fuch thing. Accordingly Grotius has well observed that this is a wrong translation. For the words ought to be rendered, But they had doubted; or though they had doubted, i. e. before that time, or before such full and overbearing evidence had been afforded them. St. Matthew has only briefly intimated their baving doubted, in the words here cited. The other Evangelists have been more particular, see Mark xvi. 11; 13, 14. Luke xxiv. 11; 21; 25; 38; 41. John xx. 9; 24; &c. and what confirms this interpretation is, that Luke xxiv. 52. there is no intimation of their doubting, when they worthiped him; but of their returning to Ferusalem with the greatest joy and satisfaction. And, Acts ii. 3. Jesus is said " to have made himself known to "the Apostles, to be alive after his passion, by many infalli-" ble figns and proofs; being feen of them forty days, and " fpeaking to them of the things which pertained to the king-" dem of God."

Grotius has finely accounted for St. Matthew's taking notice, that some bad doubted:-" This part of the history, sais be, " is not without its importance. For, to one that duely weight " the thing, it must take away all doubt of the truth of the fact; when they were convinced, who were so difficult, of " backward to believe."

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for they faw and handled the scars of the wounds, PART I. which he had received on the croffe, from the nails which had been drove through his hands, and from the spear that had pierced his side; and, in one word, they had all the evidence which they themfelves defired, and which the most careful, jealous or scrupulous persons could have wished for; if they had been in their circumstances. When Jesus had removed all their doubts and diffidence, and by irrelifible evidence proved that he was rifen again, he told the Apostles that all power was given unto him both in beaven and upon earth, and by his power he commissioned them to disciple all nations; and with a view to that great work, in which they were to be imployed, he affured them that he would in a few days fend down upon them the Holy Spirit, which he sometimes called the promise of the Father, and at other times power from on bigh. In their fight he gradually afcended towards heaven; and proved, in a few days, that he was graciously accepted of his Father, by pouring down the Spirit, in fuch a plenteous effusion of fairitual gifts and miraculous powers, as was never afforded fince man was first planted on the earth.

The argument from the efficient of the Spirit, The plenafter Christ's ascension, hath not frequently been tiful effusfet in so clear a light as the subject deserves. How- on of the Spirite after ever, a late noble author took a great deal of lauda- Christ's afble pains, and the substance of what he hath said cention,affords one of the strongest arguments for the truth a strong of the Christian religion (a). It was with great evidence. propriety that the effusion of the Spirit was reserved 'till after Christ's death, that thereby the proof of (a) See his refurrection might be rendered more strong and facra, abundant. For being able to work miracles in the Essay I. name of Christ, the Apostles carried along with them, every where, the most bright credentials of their mission, and the most striking evidences that

The Reasonablenesse of the Christian Religion.

Fesus did not remain in the state of the dead; but was raised to life again, and exalted to great power and dominion.—The scriptures distinguish between the spiritual gifts and miraculous powers. By the spiritual gifts, they feem to mean that inward illumination, which the disciples of Jesus, and especially his Apostles, received from the Spirit. And, by the miraculous powers, those extraordinary powers, by which the mighty and uncommon external effects were performed, which frequently attended their word. They had indeed, commonly, an illumination, or impulse of the Spirit, directing them to pray, or speak, or act so and so; and affuring them that thereupon the Spirit, would work fuch or fuch a miracle. But that illumination, or impulse, terminated in that particular act of the divine power. Whereas, by the spiritual gifts, they were inabled to convey fome knowlege, or deliver fome truths, which tended to improve the minds of their hearers. By miracles they could rouze men A briefac- to attention. By the spiritual gifts they could instruct, or inlighten them. For a large and particutual gifts. lar account of the spiritual gifts and miraculous powers, I would refer you to those who have profesfedly treated of them (a). I would, at present, only sum up the principal things that have been faid.-By the Spirit the Apostles had the word of wisdom, or the general plan of the Christian doctrine; and from them, or their writings, have all Christians re-This they not ceived it, in all ages and nations. only received at first, but it abode with them to the end of their lives. Hence it was that they could, upon all occasions, speak or write, with clearnesse and certainty whatever concerned the grand scheme of the Christian revelation. They had also, by the Spirit, the word of knowlege; or a full and clear comprehension of the scope and de-

fign of the law and the prophets; whereby they un-

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(a) See the History of the first planting the Chri-Aian religion, Vol. I. p. 40, &c.

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derstood what confirmation the Old Testament PART I. gives to Christianity. They had, moreover, the ift of discerning spirits, whereby they were inabled o difcern by what spirit any man spoke, who prerended to speak in the church by inspiration. They could, in some cases, discern the secret intentions of men's hearts, to prevent their doing harm to the Christian church: And, at other times, discern the spirits of men, or their future temper and behavior, and how fit they would be for fuch and fuch particular offices and stations in the church. They could prophely, and more especially foretel some considerable events, relating to the state of the Christian church, in future times. They could preach, pray, or fing pfalms and bymns, by immediate inspiration. They had, by the spirit, the gift of tongues, or an ability to preach the Gospel to perfons of different nations, in their own language. And finally, they had the gift of the interpretation of tongues, or an ability readily and intelligibly to repete in another language what had been spoken, in the church, in a foreign or dead language. As to the miraculous powers,—the Apostles had the The mira power of striking bold and daring offenders with culous some diseases, and sometimes with death itself. powers. And, when offenders became penitent, they could miraculously remove the diseases so insticted. some take to have been their power of binding and loofing, remitting or retaining the fins of men.—But, whether that be fo, or no, I will not now stay to inquire. By the effusion of the spirit, the Apostles were indued with a greater degree of fortitude than the other Christians, or than they themselves had before. They had a door of utterance, or a proper resolution and freedom of mind to deliver harsh or ungrateful truths before the largest multitudes, the highest personages, or the most august assemblies. They had the power of bealing difeases in-- stanta-

Many Christians, befides the Apostles, had fome Spiritual gifts, or miraculous powers.

PART I. stantaneously and perfectly, and of doing other mighty works; and finally, in some instances they could raise the dead .- But what was still more remarkable, and more eminently diftinguished the Apostles from all other Christians, was, that they had a power of conferring upon others some spiritual gifts, or miraculous powers, by prayer, joined with the laying on of their hands. And they appear to have conferred fuch gifts, or powers, upon all the adult converts to Christianity, wherever they came (a). So that, either by an immediate effusion from heaven, or by the laying on of the hands of the Apostles, there were imparted unto other Christians, either the word of knowlege; the discerning of Spirits; the gift of faith (b); prophefying, as it figni. fied the foretelling some lesser contingent events; or, as it was used in a larger acceptation (c), for being inspired, with a doctrine, or proper discourse to be delivered in the church when the Christians were affembled for religious worship; - with a prayer; \_with a pfalm or hymn; \_with a tongue,\_ or rather with the interpretation of a tongue. Some of the inferior Christians could also work miracles, and particularly heal diseases; and thereby confirm that doctrine which the Apostles had received from Christ himself, or by the Spirit .- All these were highly proper, if not necessary, to plant this religion in the world, with fuch amazing swiftnesse and fuccesse; and to gather together and settle churches, in fo many and fuch diftant parts of the Arational world. The event was just what one would have account of expected, upon the supposition that such miracles were really wrought, and these things afford us a of Christi- clear and satisfactory account of the speedy progresse of Christianity, the gathering in such multitudes of converts, and planting fuch a number of churches,

the fwift progresse anity.

> - (a) See Miscel. sacra, Essay I. p. 118, &c. (b) See above. p. 6. (c) 1 Cor. xiv. 3, 4, 5; 24, &c.

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churches, in that one age. But the friends of PART I. Pyrrbo are forced to acknowlege fuch an effect without being able to affign any fufficient cause, or give any account of the matter, but what is merely imaginary, or the fruit of their own invention .-The Apostles and their fellow-laborers, before they left the world, erected churches of Christians, in most parts of the Roman Empire, and beyond the bounds of it; in the countries of Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Cyprus, Crete, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Afia, Greece, and Italy; in the cities of Rome, Cefarea, Antioch in Syria, Antioch in Pisidia, Ephesus, Athens, Corinth, Philippi, Theffalonica and Rome; and in many other cities and countries. And we find, from the hints contained in the Acts of the Apostles and their Epistles, that the Christians were indued with spiritual gifts or miraculous powers in most of those churches. How much they abounded in the church of Corintb, will eafily appear to any one that reads St. Paul's two Epifles to that church, with any tolerable care and attention.-From Acts ii. 38, 39. and viii. 14, &c. and xix. 1, &c. Rom. i. 11. and other texts to the fame purpose,—one would gather, that the adult converts in general had these gifts or miraculous powers; wherever there had been an Apostle to convey them, by the laying on of his hands: And that, in other churches, where there had not yet been an Apostle, no person (generally speaking) had the miraculous gifts, but fuch only as had come from other places where they had converfed with the Apostles.—Now consider, that in most of the great towns and cities, in the Roman Empire, and in several places beyond the bounds of it, there were, in one age, Christian churches planted, and that the Christians in general had either some spiritual gifts or miraculous powers.-What a blaze of evidence was there? The people in those several places had evidences at hand, and that in abundance, to convince them that God was

The 11th text explained. 54; 56.

PART I. among the Christians of a truth. How justly, therefore. and emphatically might St. John, when he spoke of the witnesse of the Spirit, which was then so com. mon among the Christians, fay; be that believeth on I John v. the Son of God, bath the witnesse in himself. But be, that 10. See p. (after all these evidences) believesh not God, bath made bim a liar, because be bath not believed in the testimon.

which God bath given of his Son?

Pyrrbo was surprized at the producing so much evidence, which he had fcarce ever heard of, or attended to ; and faid, Theophilus, I am now ready to doubt, on the other fide; and to suspect that, if there had been all the evidence you mention, there could fcarce have been one unbeliever remaining. I know (replied Theophilus) that you are always ready to doubt, be it on one fide or the other. There is fometimes too much evidence, and fometimes too little. And it would not be an easy matter for you yourself (I believe) to say how much would just please you, and be exactly enough. However, this is the way in which the New Testament accounts for the speedy progresse of Christianity, upon its first appearance. These the evidences, as they are there related. Nor would any evidence be regarded by all ; as we may clearly fee in numberlesse instances, in which it is plain men judge not according to evidence, but according to inclination, interest, or fome other unworthy view .-The refurrection of Jesus Christ, and the consequent effusion of the Spirit, in such variety of gifts and miraculous powers, were fuch evidences as laid level to the meanest capacities. For they were plain fatts and easily understood, which had all the marks of truth and reality, and the confequences of which were plain and obvious. Whoever, therefore, would not attend to, and imbrace truths of fuch great importance, which were in that fignal manher taught and confirmed, plainly discovered 1 vicious n,

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vicious disposition of mind, and might be justly PART L condemned for his unbelief. For it is in itself a wicked thing to reject truths of moment, when well attested, and greatly conduces to harden men more and more in their vicious courses. the Christian Faith was, on the other hand, a principle of virtue and piety, to those who fincerely imbraced it, and greatly tended to reform them, or render them more pious and virtuous.—When the evidences were fo many and fo strong, and the truths discovered of such unspeakable moment, it was faid with great justnesse and propriety, If our The 12th Gospel be bid, it is bid only to those that are lost, text exi. e. as the next verse clearly shows, unto those that plained. are lost unto all sense of virtue, or given up to worldhy- See p. 68. mindednesse and vice. And again, with what emphafis might it be faid, bow shall they escape, if they neglest so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those that beard bim; God also bearing them witnesse both with figns and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to the divine will? You have in a manner confessed, Pyrrbo, that all these things taken together amount to a most furprizing evidence. With what appearance of truth, therefore, can it be faid, that Christianity is not founded on Argument? Were all these arguments given for no end, and to answer no purpose at all? Why all that profusion and waste of argument (if I may so expresse myself) suppose this purely imaginary and fictitious inspiration of the Spirit, communicated to every individual, was to produce faith, without any rational argument; when so many and such distinguishing evidences were afforded? I wish that a gentleman of Pyrrbo's good sense and great difcernment would but frankly confesse how such things affect his mind, and whether they do not Talle in him a fort of indignation at fuch writers

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PART I. as would so grossly impose upon him, by perverting the plainest facts, and pretending that there is no rational evidence, where even Pyrrbo is ready to doubt whether there were not too much, and to conclude that greater numbers must needs have been converted, if fuch evidences had been actually afforded?—Pyrrho's color rose in his cheeks, and he feemed by his countenance to be greatly moved, when Theophilus thrust home and pushed him so hard. But, with a fort of a forced fmile he, after fome hefitation, answered, You know, Theophilus, that men of our fett, whom you call Sceptics, are feldom or never caught making fuch concessions to an adversary. It is our way to suspend and doubt on, even when we have nothing ready to object or answer. But you have one thing more to do, before you can hope to make me your convert, if ever I become fuch; and that is, to prove that the books, which record fuch furprizing things, are authentic and genuine. For, tho you might have a plaufible handle for triumph, if your history were clearly made out to be true; yet I would not have you triumph before a victory. You have yet a great deal of work upon your hands, and I must infift upon it that, in the next place, you flow the authenticnesse of what you call the Sacred Scriptures; but which my author often infinuates to be no more than a suspicious, precarious, and uncertain tradition .-Theophilus, with a ferious air, replied, I have obferved, with great concern, that it is your way always to suspend and doubt on, even when the evidence feems to affect you, and you have nothing to object. That a man should suspend his judgment 'till he has examined, or evidence is laid before him, is quite reasonable, and what he ought to do. But why should not truth be received, and evidence acknowleged by you, as well as the rest of mankind? You feem to be afraid left I should catch you

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you unawares, or furprize you, by leading you on PART I. a fudden into fome fnare, by making you acknowlege yourself at least almost persuaded to be a Christian. What interest is it of mine, that Pyrrbo should think and act right, but only that he is my friend, and that I fincerely wish well to him and to all mankind; and should rejoice to see all attend to evidence, honeftly acknowlege it, when they are convinced; and, in all respects, take the right method in thinking and acting?—I am ready to point out the genuinenesse of the books of the New Testament. and defire that they may be examined in the fame manner that other antient books are; and fee whether they do not bear all the marks of being authentic, that any books of equal antiquity can pretend to. They allowed that to be a very fair propofal; but, because they would have that part of the subject considered all at once, they agreed to defer it to their next meeting. Upon which the whole company mixing in the conversation, they fpent the rest of the evening in discourse about news, politics, and feveral other indifferent subjects.

## DIALOGUE III.

A San introduction to the next evening's converfation, Crito said to Theophilus, You have, Sir,
given us your sentiments concerning the Faith which
is required of a Christian, and summed up the arguments which are to effect such a Faith. Pyrrho expects of you to prove the genuinenesse of the books
of the New Testament, which bis author seems, in
some places, to doubt of. What have you to offer
in proof of this point? You are now at liberty to
speak to that part of the subject, and treat it in
your own way. Pyrrho said, he begged leave to
state the difficulty, as he had collected it from va-

national desired to the following

rious

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PART I. rious hints difperfed up and down in feveral parts of his author. Crito told him, the proposal was not amisse, as it would shorten the objections, when they came to confider them. He, therefore, ordered him to procede. Then Pyrrho faid to Theophilus, "You take the books of the New Testament to contain a genuine history, which is true in itself, and ought to be believed by us. My author is of a contrary opinion, infinuating, p. 20. that it is a doubtful account; a testimony is liable to be controverted. P. 31. It is fill all but bumane testimony, in its nature ever liable to error, as depending only on fallible authors. P. 52. The voice of God bimself-bas been dwindled long since to buet mane tradition. The great original attestation-is funk with us into the uncertain traditions of fallible ec men, relating it one after another. P. 53. A miracle that was ocular to its cotemporaries, is to us no more than uncertain bear-say. And he affures us, that this must necessarily be the consequence, when once it comes to be reported.—For we are not to believe any thing because another sais, he saw it.—The light of conviction can extend no further than to the eye-witnesse " bimself, being lost and extinguished the first moment it is offered to be imparted. He therefore asks, e p. 59. what is there after this remaining in\_these fuspicious repositories of bumane Testimony, that can now deferve our least notice, or be thought of const quence to ingage a moment's attention upon this subject! And p. 60, 61. He speaks with the utmost contempt of manuscript authorities and paper revelations; -which must in time come to want repair;and must necessarily be the work of men. These and other like infinuations my author has thrown out, concerning the Scriptures, and the credit which we are to give to them."-I well know, faid Theophilas, the manner of forme writers; and that, when they are pressed with a difficulty, they

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can readily throw out some general infinuations, or PART I. call the things they diflike by foure contemptuous names, and fo go off with an imaginary victory. But names do not alter the nature of things. And I hope to bring fuch evidence as may deserve regard. But, before I offer the evidence for the authenticnesse of the books of the New Testament, I must settle one point with you, or your author. For he has here, as in many other cases, talked two ways; formetimes allowing the books of the New Testament to be genuine and the history true; but withal infinuating, that no history whatever deferves any regard. In other places he drops hints of the history's being no more than precarious and uncertain bear-fay, a suspicious repository of bumane testimony; an account liable to be controverted; and the like. Now these are quite different things, and requite different answers. "If nothing but ocular Things, " proof deferve regard, and all hiftory and humane which we " testimony be mere uncertain hear-say ; if all evi- have not " dence vanishes as foon as it comes to be re-feen, may " ported; and we are not to believe any thing be believed " because another sais, be saw it if the light of upon bu-" conviction extends no further than to the eye- mane teffi-" witnesse himself; but is lost and extinguished " the first moment it is offered to be imparted;"then nothing can be proved, but what we ourselves have feen. Then farewel all Faith among mankind! All history (which has been thought so entertaining and instructive) is mere romance, and rendered intirely precarious, if not wholly uteleffe: All trade and commerce is at an end, and all converfation ceafes; because nothing can be depended upon. The proofs of Christianity have been brought to this length, " that, if there is "any credit to be given to the history of former "times, then Christianity must be true." Some of thole, who have wrote against revelation, seem to have

PART I. have been aware of this consequence; and rather than Christianity should prove true, they will denv the Faith of all antient history, and plead that no thing is to be believed, but what a man fees with his own eyes. Had I not reason, then, to say, that they are enemies to learning as well as revelation. and would reduce us to a flate of ignorance and barbarity? The testimony of credible persons has. in all ages, been regarded, not by the vulgar only, but by men of the best sense, and greatest learning and acutenesse; though the persons, who related the facts, were not infallible; and theirs was no more than humane testimony. I leave you to judge with what views fuch men write, who would confound all truth and falsehood which depends upon humane testimomy, and would wipe out all knowlege of antiquity at once, by faying, "that "they were only fallible men who recorded these things; and that we are not obliged to believe " any thing, because another sais be saw it." Probability is all the evidence we have in many cases, in which neverthelesse we act, and act rationally. And the probability rifes higher, in the case before us, than in most of the affairs of humane life. All our daily converse and mutual confidence in one another; all trade and commerce; almost all the determinations in our courts of judicature go upon the fupposition, that a man may reasonably believe a thing which he himself never faw, and that because another sais " he saw it, or knows it to be " true." And every man, in numberlesse instances, acts upon the testimony and credit of others; and that most rationally and without any manner of fcruple. Who doubts of there being fuch a place as Paris or Rome? Would he not be thought quite whimfical, who should scruple trading to the East or West Indies, merely because he never saw the places? Or did ever any man in his fenses fay, cc I will gion,

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" I will not venture any cargoe thither; because PART I. " I have never been there myfelf, and I am not " obliged to believe any thing, because another sais be " faw it, and it is not in my power to prove a negative, " and contradict bim?" That there is such a country as Italy, or Spain; that there were fuch persons as Julius Cafar, or King Henry the VIIIth of England; are not to be reckoned among the number of self-evident, or demonstrable truths. But, though we have nothing for them but humane testimony, or the reports of fallible men; yet we as firmly and as rationally believe them, as we do any demonstrable or felf-evident truths whatever. And it must be merely in the heat of controversy, or when he has some particular end to answer, that any man will call in question such clear and well attested truths. I will not, therefore, abuse your time and patience any longer in proving what no man of sense will deny.

As to the proofs of the genuinenesse of the books Thebooks of the New Testament, they appear to me to lie of the New thus;— those books are said to have been written proved geby Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, Paul, nuine. James and Jude; i. e. either by the apostles themselves, or by two of their intimate friends; - persons, who must have understood the nature of Christianity, and have known the truth of the facts there recorded, the best of any men, as being perfonally concerned in most of the things which they relate, and as having the best intelligence as to the rest.—(a) The evidence of the truth of any history (a) As to is either internal, or external. The internal evidence lows, see depends upon the probability of the things related, the Prethe confistence of the several parts, and the plain-face and nesse and simplicity of the narration. Every atten- Conclusion tive reader may observe several of the internal marks Lardner's of credibility of the gospel history contained in the Credibili-New Testament; though he may be assisted to ob- ty of the ferve many more, by persons who are more curious Gospel History,

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PART I. or judicious than himself. The external evidence

(a) Mr. Lardner's Credibility of the Gospel History, Past. II.

lies not fo much within the reach of the generality of mankind. But there is a most learned and use. ful work now in hand, (a) and which is already carried on to a confiderable length, the peculiar defign of which is to inable persons of ordinary capacities, who for want of a learned education, or of fufficient leifure, are deprived of the advantage of reading over antient writings, to judge for them. felves, concerning the external evidence of the facts related in the New Testament. In that performance, there are a number of passages, at full length, faithfully translated, and taken from other antient authors of good credit, who lived at or near the time in which the things are faid to have happened, and who bear Testimony to the books of the New Testament, their authors, or the facts contained in them .- Other learned men among the moderns have flown that the geography of the New Testament, and many other facts, customs, and principles, are confirmed by the testimonies of antient writers. But this author hath, by many years hard fludy and indefatigable diligence and labor, shown in the first part of his work, that those facts, which are occasionally mentioned in the New Testament; and in bis second part, that the prineipal facts, there related, are confirmed by antient writers of established credit, who were co-temporaries with Jesus or his Apostles, or who lived near that time: And he hath proved likewise that, in the fucceding ages, these books continued to be preserved and read as authentic, or genuine. It appears, from what he hath faid, that there is nothing in the books of the New Testament unsutable to the age in which they are supposed to have been writ, and that these writers had a knowlege of the affairs of those times, not to be found in authors of later ages. We are bereby affured that the books

lence rality d useready culiar Y. Can, or ntage theme facts erfort full other at or have books e facts mong of the ftoms, ftimoh, by igence that in the e prinintient empod near at, in to be e. It 15 nounfutao have owlege in aubat the books

books of the New Testament are genuine, and that they Pare T. were writ by persons who lived at or near the time of those events, of subich they have given the hiftory .- Any one It would may be fensible how hard it is for the most learn-have been ed, acute and cautious man, to write a book in difficult, if the character of fome person of an earlier age; and fible, to not betray his own time, by fome miltake about have forthe affairs of the age in which he pretends to place ged fuch himself; or by allusions to customs, or principles, procured fince sprung up; or by some phrase, or expression, the belief not then in use. It is no easy thing to escape all of them. these dangers in the smallest performance, tho it be a treatife of theory or speculation. Those hazards are greatly increased, when the work is of any length; and especially if it be historical and be concerned with characters and customs. It is yet more difficult to carry on such a design in a work confisting of several pieces, writ to all appearance by feveral persons. Many, indeed, are defirous to deceive, but all hate to be deceived. And, therefore, though attempts have been made to impose upon the world in this way, they have never, or very rarely succeeded; but have been detected and exposed by the skill and vigilance of those who have been concerned for the truth. The volume of the New Testament consists of several pieces. These (as hath been observed) are ascribed to eight feveral persons. And there are the ftrongest appearances that they were not all writ by an one hand, but by as many persons as they are There are leffer differences in the reascribed to. lations of some facts, and such feeming contradictions as would never have happened, if these books had been all the work of one person, or of several who writ in concert. There are as many peculianties of temper and stile as there are names of writers; divers of which shew no depth of genius or compasse of knowlege. Here are representa-

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ly mention'd, the New Testament genuine.

The Reasonablenesse of the Christian Religion,

PART I. tions of the titles, posts, behavior of persons of higher and lower rank in many parts of the world. The facts, Persons are introduced, and their characters are set occasional- in full light. Here is a history of things done in feveral cities and countries; and there are allusions. prove the to a vast variety of customs and tenets of persons of books of feveral nations, fects and religions. The whole is writ without affectation, with the greatest simplicity and plainnesse, and is confirmed by other antient writers of unquestioned authority.- If it be difficult for a person of learning and experience to compose a small treatife, concerning matters of speculation, with the characters of a more early age than that in which he writes: It is next to impossible, that fuch a work of confiderable length, confifting of feveral pieces, with a great variety of historical facts, representations of characters, principles and customs of several nations and distant countries, of persons of all ranks and degrees, of many interests and parties, should be performed by eight several persons, the most of them unlearned, without any appearance of concert. Such a remarkable attestation to the truth of their history does arise from the facts occasionally mentioned by the writers of the New Testament.

The external evidence of their being genuine, is full and fufficient.

. The books of the New Testament are in all twenty feven, twenty of which were received by the Christians as genuine, immediately upon their first publication and spread. Six of the Epistles were at first doubted of, viz. that to the Hebrews, the epistle of St. James, the 2d of St. Peter, the 2d and 3d of St. John, and that of St. Jude; and fo was also the book of Revelation. But, when they were found to be genuine productions, and writ by the Apostles of our Lord; then they, likewise, were received, and have now for many centuries been by Christians in general, acknowleged to belong to the Canon of Scripture. If these seven books

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books had, upon examination, nor proved genuine, there would have been sufficient evidence from the other twenty, that Jesus was the Christ, a prophet sent of God, to whose message men were obliged to pay regard. But that they should be received, after they had been doubted of, is to us an argument of the care and vigilance of the primitive Christians, who would not receive any writings as genuine and apostolic, without examination and sufficient evidence. And, though these seven contain no new doctrines or precepts, yet they help to clear up and illustrate several points, and afford a further confirmation of the truth of Christianity.

That the books of the New Testament are justly ascribed to the authors, whose names they bear, appears with greater clearnesse and certainty, and more abundant testimony, than that the poets, Virgil and Horace; or the orator, Tully; or the historians, Livy, Dion Cassius, Q. Curtius, Suetonius or Tacitus, were the authors of the books now ascribed unto them. For, as religion is of more importance to mankind than the subjects those authors have wrote upon, there is much more evidence for the genuinenesse of the facred writings. For the books of the New Testament were writ in that very age, in which these remarkable facts are said to have happened, and even while many persons were alive, and many churches remained, which had the miraculous gifts. These writings were dispersed far and wide, even in the days of the Apostles themfelves. They were communicated to the Christians, and fent to the churches foon after they were writ. We find expresse orders, as to some of them, that they should immediately be read publicly, not only in those churches, to which they were directed, but in other churches also. And, as Justin Martyr (one of the most early fathers) intimates, that it was the common practice to read the books of

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PART I. of the New Testament publicly in their churches, in his time, it is most likely that the Apostles had recommended it from the begining. These facred books were even then credited by vast numbers of people, though they were not recommended by their princes, nor the belief of them injoined by the civil magistrate. And, though they might easily have been confuted, if they had been falle; yet we do not find that any persons so much as attempted a confutation of the facts. So far from any counter history's being come down to us, that we have not fo much as an hint of there ever having been any fuch thing. On the other hand, we find that the most bitter enemies of the Christians in the first ages, and even those that professedly wron against Christianity, who would have been glad to have intirely overturned it, and who had the fairthe princi- est opportunity and full power in their hands to effect it, if possible; such as Celfus, Porphyry, Julian and the authors of the Jewish Talmud, and the like ; yet none of them ever called in question the genuinenesse of the books of the New Testament; but have ackowleged the grand facts, and even allowed that Jefor worked miracles .- The books of the New Testament were writ in greek, the language then most universal

ly enderstood. They were foun difperfed and read by the enemies of Christianity, as well as by its zealous friends and votaries. They have been tranflated into a variety of other languages. They were not only read very early in the churches, but expounded and preached upon. They were read allo by the Christians in their families and closes; and there are few passages but have been quoted, or alluded to, by other authors now extant, and fuch large quotations have been made by perform of different ranks and flations, and of all ages fince they first appeared; and yet agree, in general, with what we now find in the favor books themselves.

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These books have been transcribed once and again, PART I. Copies have been multiplied, and have got into various hands; and yet the copies and translations. which have been collected from various and distant parts of the world, through Europe, Afia and Africa, and collated with a most critical and minute care, are allowed, by all capable judges, to agree in all the grand points of the Christian dostrine and morals. The generality of the primitive Christians had a high veneration for these books, as looking upon them to contain an inestimable treasure of knowlege; and therefore may be supposed, of course, to have taken care that they should be preferved pure and genuine, and faithfully copied out. The Christians foon divided into several sects and parties; but they all, in general, appealed to thefe books, as the great standard of their faith and worship, and as the grand charter of their religion. So have the various fects of Christians, in later ages, generally speaking, appealed to the Scriptures, in support of their diffinguishing opinions, and have all along kept a jealous eye upon one another, leaft any one should make any the least alteration in the facred records, to favor their own peculiar tenets. Thus the wife, over-ruling providence of God has turned the weaknesse and folly of mankind into a mean of preferving these best of books, (a very fit object of an especial care!) books which contain the best of principles, recommend and inforce the noblest and most perfect morals, were apparently writ with the best views, and have in them inimitable marks of truth and fimplicity. I will not call these arguments demonstration, but they appear to me to be good and conclusive. For, surely, it is in the highest degree improbable and altogether incredible, that the books of the New Testament should not be genuine, inasmuch as they have those very marks and characters of being ge-

If fuch books had, in any age, been forged, they ed credit.

PART I. nuine and authentic, which any books have that are really and unquestionably so. And, if the books of the New Testament were writ by persons, who lived before the destruction of Jerusalem, i. e. if they were writ at the time, in which they are said to have been writ, the things related in them are true. If they had not been matters of fact, they would not have been credited by any persons near that time, and in those parts of the world, in which they are faid to have been done; but would have been treated as the would not the most notorious lies and falshoods. Suppose have gain- three or four books should now appear among us in the language most generally understood, giving an account of many remarkable and extraordinary events, which had happened in some kingdome of Europe, and in the most noted cities of the countries adjoining to it; some of them said to have happened fixty or feventy years ago, others between twenty or thirty, others nearer our own time: would they not be looked upon, as the most manifest and ridiculous forgeries and impostures that ever were contrived? Would great numbers of persons, in those very places, change their religious principles and practices, upon the credit of things reported to be publickly done, which no man had ever heard of before? Or rather, is it possible that such a design as this should be conceived by any fober and ferious persons, or even the most wild and extravagant? And If the bistory of the New Testament be credible, the Christian religion If the hi- is true. If the things there related to have been ftory of -done by Jesus, and by his followers, in virtue of

be true, true.

Testament powers derived from him, do not prove a person to come from God, and that his doctrine is true Christiani- and divine, nothing can. Will any reasonable by must be man, after all this, pretend to say, that Christianity is destitute of evidence, or not founded on Argument? This author may call the history bumane

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tradition, uncertain hear-fay, and whatever names PART I. he pleases. But an history which hath such internal marks of truth, and which has been received as genuine in all ages, fince its first publication, cannot be overturned by these and the like general infinuations. Whoever would do any thing to purpole, must bring antient and authentic histories, writ in or near the time, which contradict the facts. Or, if that cannot be done (as all learned men allow it cannot) then let him confesse that there are no fuch contrary histories. pleases, may try to prove that the books of the New Testament are all a forgery. The books are in every body's hands. And (to the honor of the Christians of the present age, and of our own nation, be it spoken) there never was a time or place, where Christianity was the prevailing religion, that such perfons could have had more liberty to do their utmost to overthrow the truth and genuinenesse of the sacred writings; if they were capable of doing it, or the thing were possible. It is not throwing out distant hints and general infinuations, as if they had fome evidence in referve, which they are afraid to publish. There are some uncertain traditions, and some forged histories, which have been detected and proved false. But will any man dare to say that, therefore, there is no true bistory? And, if it must be acknowleged that some histories are true, then let us fairly try, by just and candid criticism, and those usual methods by which learned men would examine the genuinenesse of a Terence, or a Livy, or any other book of equal antiquity, whether the books of the New Testament have not all the marks of antiquity, truth and genuinenesse, that any books of like date can pretend to.

When Theophilus came to the conclusion of this The confirst Part of his work; he put on the most significant of cant look, and lifting up his voice beyond the usual Part I.

pitch,

PART I.

pitch, he addressed himself to Pyrrbo, in the most friendly, and ardent manner, and faid, - I have now offered as much as I think needful upon this argument; I have shewn you that Faith is a virtuous disposition of mind, and that the virtue of it confifts chiefly in a love of truth, and a readinesse to professe it, and to be influenced by it; - that Christianity abounds with evidences, both internal and external; that it is in itself a reasonable service: that it was introduced into the world by the atteftation of prophefy and miracle. And, that the most fignal and concluding evidence was the refurrection of Jesus Christ the author of this religion, and that most plenteous effusion of the Spirit which followed foon after his ascension; that the books of the New Testament which contain this religion, together with the evidences of it, are authentic and genuine; that they were writ by the authors they are commonly ascribed to, and have all the internal and external attestations of truth and credibility. -Methinks fuch a complication of arguments might not only appear to the understanding, but even warm and affect the heart of my friend Pyrrho; however he may put on an air of indifference, or affect to expresse himself with his usual doubt or hesitation. Let me feriously ask you, Pyrrbo, why should not you carefully inquire into these matters? Or what should tempt you to conceal your fentiments, when you are convinced? If you were a vicious man, I could eafily account for your being inclined to infidelity; because the precepts of the gospel require such strict virtue, and its doctrine is to plain and expresse with respect to a righteous judgment to come, and a state of recompence after death. But I am well fatisfied of your virtue, in other respects; and that you will not indulge yourfelf in any of those immoralities which Christianity condemns, and in the practice of which you would

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would be rendered uneasy, if the Christian religion PART I. should, after all, prove true. - Can it be an affectation of thinking out of the common road, and diffinguishing yourself as a wit or a genius? You have other talents and accomplishments to distinguish you; even suppose you should inquire, be convinced, and professe yourself a believer. And you must allow that the common people are sometimes in the right.—Is it Priest-craft, which terrifies you, and makes you averse to own what some ambitious, defigning Ecclefiastics have cried aloud for, and contended so earnestly about: when instead of Christ's kingdome, which was not of this world, they have been feeking after a mere worldly kingdome; and have had very different things in view than propagating the gospel, or promoting the religion of our bleffed Lord? You know, in other cases, how to distinguish better, and not condemn the righteous with the wicked. Let not, therefore, Christianity fuffer because of the folly or wickednesse of some of the teachers of it. Or finally, can it be those many absurd doctrines, and superstitious, or wicked practices, which have been reprefented by fome as pure, found and genuine Christianity? But why will you not do yourself and the gospel the justice, to take your account of it from the Scriptures themselves,—those pure and sacred fountains of truth? I am very fenfible that they, who make objections against revelation, reap the most plentiful harvest from fystems of Divinity, and the creeds, or practices of this or that church, or party; against which they argue, as if that was the pure and unmixed doctrine of Christ. But the BIBLE, the BIBLE is the religion of Protestants, and ought to be the religion of all Christians. For there are the articles of the Christian Faith, and the rules of worship and practice; those articles and rules, which were delivered by Jesus and his Apostles. They who have a mind,

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PART I. to contend against unscriptural and unreasonable articles of Faith, and superstitious modes and ceremonies in worship, or against any absurd or wicked practices,- let them do their utmost, and I heartily wish them successe. But let not Christianity itfelf be condemned, or fuffer, because of the folly or wickednesse of those who professe this excellent religion.— We have had more books writ against the Christian religion in our age, than perhaps, in The persons, who wrote against it in the early ages of the church, could not deny the facts, and therefore the authors were few, and their attempts feeble and ineffectual. At this distance of time, the facts may be more plaufibly called in question, among such as do not attend to the internal marks of their truth and genuinenesse, or have little or no acquaintance with antiquity. But, when Christianity has been canvassed with the greatest exactnesse, it will appear to be proof. When it has again gone through the fornace, it will come out like pure gold, more bright and glorious. By the arguments which have been mentioned, and others of like nature, it gained ground, and made fwift advances, for the first 300 years. Even then the Christian religion triumphed over all the opposition and malice of the world ;- though the Philosophers did their utmost in arguing, the Orators harangued, the Wits and Satyrifts ridiculed, and the powers of the world were its professed enemies and persecutors. The power of truth was great and did prevail. Pure and uncorrupt Christianity is the same excellent thing as ever, and will be victorious and triumph again. Such repeted examination can do it no harm, but greatly tends to clear up its nature, and make its evidence appear more bright and conspicuous. May truth and liberty daily gain ground, and mankind in general not abuse, but wisely improve them! For these are things of the greatest

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nd trican do nature, ht and y gain ie, but of the greatest greatest moment, and for which we must expect to give an account to the righteous Governor and Judge of all. And I most earnestly wish that not only Theophilus and Crito, but Pyrrho also, and all the company, may at last be found among those who have loved truth, acknowleged its importance, imbraced it according to its worth and evidence, and been duly and steadily influenced by it.—Theophilus began to look round him, to see whether any more were expected from him; and observed the whole company in a fort of fixed attention, somewhat like that described by Milton.—

" The angel ended, and in Adam's ear

" So charming left his voice, that he a while

"Thought him still speaking, still stood fixt to hear."

But, when he found that, upon his making a long and solemn pause, no body spoke a word, he acquainted Pyrrho that he was now come to the conclusion of what he thought proper to offer by way of argument, and desired to know whether he had any remaining difficulties and objections; for he was ready to hear him speak in his turn, and to give him the best solutions he was able. Yes, sais Pyrrho, I have several objections; too many to mention at present; and, therefore, I propose that we defer them to another time, and then enter on the second Part of our work. They all readily same into the proposal, and so the company broke up for that time.

## PART II. DIALOGUE I.

PART II. WHEN the company were come together the next evening, they entered upon the fecond part of their design. And Crito, as chairman, introduced it, by telling Pyrrho, that now was the time for him to produce his objections. But Sir (fairs he) I have a few things to propose to you, that we may procede in a proper method, and bring the fubject to a more speedy conclusion, viz. where Theopbilus has already given you his folution of any of the difficulties, mentioned by your author, you would have recourse to that, and reserve it to be considered at your leisure; unlesse you have some further difficulty upon that head, which Theophilus has not touched upon. Another thing is, that you would chiefly restrict yourself to the objections made, or infinuated, by your author. you fee fit to add any other, or to try to give the objections of the author any additional force, we are at leifure to attend you, we will hear you with patience, and Theophilus will (I doubt not) do his best to give you full fatisfaction. A third thing is, that, whereas your author has repeted the fame objection, or flarted the same difficulty, up and down, in feveral parts of his book, tho' in various phrases and different manners,-you would do your best to collect the several objections, or difficulties, under their distinct heads, and mention them once for all, without returning to the same subject over Pyrrbo consented to all these and over again. proposals, on condition Theophilus would, after all was finished, give him in writing the substance of the whole debate. Theophilus readily promised, he would. Upon which the conversation proceded as follows, OBJ, I.

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OBJ, I.

Pyrrbo having brought his author with him, and PART II. following his method, as far as he could confiftently with Crito's orders, he produced what is faid, p. 5. where it is afferted, in strong terms, " If once " you come fairly to proving all things, be assured " that you will never hold fast any thing. " fame purpose he asks this question, is it not most " absurd to require a belief, if previous examination be " requifite? And again, he fais, if I am once left " free to examine, I can by no means be tied up in the " issue. P. 26. He represents a rational Faith, as " always precarious. For what reason first established " (fais he) the same reason must ever have the power to re-" peal. P. 44. If a man is to be held only by his own rea-" sonings,—what is this, but—stamping an equal mark " of necessary truth upon a thousand opposite opinions? " P. 96. He afferts that reason may chance to lead a " man wrong, as well as right. P. 116. He infinuates " that the same perspicuous proofs may determine one " man to be a Christian, and may leave another " as confirmed an infidel. And this is often intimated " in other places. Now all these are strong ob-" jections against a rational Faith. For at this rate, " a rationalist must ever remain, unsettled in any " thing."

When Pyrrbo had thus stated the objection, Theophilus answered, that these were some of the pasfages, from whence it had been inferred, that the author had no more regard for natural religion than for reveled. For, if reason be such an unfixed, uncertain, precarious thing, then truth and falfbood may be thereby equally proved, and good and evil be shewn to be alike excellent;—which is the old, atheistic scheme, and ends in universal confusion. Do you, therefore, apprehend it necessary, Pyrrbo, to let aside all natural religion, in order to overthrow Christianity? As this objection appears to me, we must begin with first principles. I would, there-

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PART II. fore, observe, that good has charms, of which evil Good and is destitute; and that truth is attended with evievil, truth dence, which fallbood never can have. This all men must perceive; they cannot, therefore, be inshood, dif- nocent in making no distinction between truth and fallhood, good and evil. The rational and examining believer, when he has proved all things, considers himself as obliged to hold fast that which is good. And what is good may, in all cases of importance, be readily diffinguished from what is evil. Tho, therefore, he is left free to examine, yet he is tied up in the iffue; \_\_not by the authority of men, but by the force of truth, by the reason of things, or by argument and evidence. I acknowlede that every man is at liberty to think and determine which way he pleases, with respect to men. For such persons, as do not interfere with the rights of civil fociety, men cannot lawfully restrain; nay, all such the magistrate ought to protect. But they, who do not honeftly fearch, and professe and act according to light and evidence, must stand to the consequences before the bar of God and their own conscience, and must expect to be punished, because they have not had the love of the truth, or have held it in unrighteousnesse. But I say again, that reason and evidence is that, by which a man ought to be determined, or refolved. Your author does indeed fay, what reason first established, the same reason must ever bave the power to repeal. Whereas the very reverse of this is true; and therefore a rational Faith is of all others the least subject to change. A man, who has taken up his Faith without reason and evidence, may run from one extreme to another. Entbusiasm and infidelity are more nearly allied, than may at first view be imagined. For, however opposite they may appear, they in fact take place successively in the same man. He, who has for a time blindly followed the dictates liur

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tates of his own fancy, has, thro' the finking of PART II. his spirits, and in a gloomy hour, doubted of every thing, for which he had once a great zeal, but not a zeal according to knowlege. That is, indeed, the natural effect of a mere mechanical religion, or implicite enthusiastic Faith. Having discovered some mistakes in the principles of his education, or found upon examination, that he had believed without evidence, he rashly and precipitately concludes there is no evidence; and therefore at once throws off all, and commences infidel. Whereas he, who builds upon reason and evidence, builds upon a rock, and is the most likely to continue in the Faith, grounded and fettled. The evidence of truth, once discerned, hath the surest hold of an pright man, and is the best preservative against postasy, or infidelity.

" Pyrrho turned to his author, p. 8. and asked Obj. II. this question; Can it be, by the exercise of their reason, that men can be required to think all alike? For my author takes the Faith of Christians to consist in an unity of opinion: And schisms and berefies in holding different opinions, p. 65. and, p. 83, &c. he takes notice, that a general rule of Faith was instituted to prevent controversy, and to make all men intirely of the same mind. And, in many other places, he infinuates that unity of opinion is the Faith required of Christians. Now, as such a thing cannot be effected by reason and argument, it is ridiculous to talk of a rational Faith." beophilus faid that in this, as well as in many ther things, he apprehended the author had conadicted himself. For he has declared, p. 76. bough men cannot be all of one opinion, they may of one aith, which they hold, not in unity of understanding; t as our Liturgy well expresses it, in the bond of ace, and unity of Spirit. So that you fee this in-

ired, infallible believer, this author of yours,

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PART II. who is not left liable, one moment, to a possibility of error and imposition, [see p. 60, 90.] is neverthelesse found capable of contradicting himself, and of shifting his ideas, just as it will best fute his purpose Do you imagine, Pyrrbo, that those persons, in all ages and nations, whom your author represents as having Faith wrought in them, by the infpiration of the Spirit, without reason and without scripture, have all thought alike?-I know nothing of that (faid Pyrrho.) For, though my author has frequently fpoke of fuch a thing, I professe I do not understand it. And our fect in general take it to be all fneer; or put on for a mask to obscure his true defign. But, whatever his defign was, I apprehend that his arguments will prove that Faith has no foundation in reason; or (in other words) there is no reason for believing the Christian religion, Faith doth Theophilus replied, that according to the New Tenot confift stament. Faith did not confift in an unity of opinion; or in all Christians thinking in all points alike, And, indeed, as fuch an uniformity is in itself impossible, it cannot rationally be required. Mr. Locke, in his excellent treatife, of the Reasonablenesse of the Christian Religion, &cc. has shown that our Lord and his Apostles were fo far from requiring men to think all alike, in every particular, that the one fingle proposition, which they have made effential to being a Christian, is, that Jefus is the Christ, otherwise called the Melfiab, the Son of God, or Savior of men. Whoever, upon attending to the

> evidence, was convinced of this truth, acknowleged the belief of it, and took upon him the profession of this Faith by baptisin, was supposed sufficiently to have acknowleged Christ's authority, and thereupon to be intitled to communion with any church,

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one flock and one fold, which are united under Christ PART H. Jesus their common head and Lord. [See the auther, p. 29; 44.] Pyrrbo asked, whether the belief of One artithat one proposition was all the Faith that was funda-cle fundamental? Theophilus answered, that is the Faith funda-mental to mental to being a Christian, or to the being inti-Christian: tled every where to Christian communion. But it -the is fundamental to the falvation of every man, that he number of be a fincere, honest, upright man; and that he inquire articles fundaand readily receive whatever he finds to be true, whe-mental to ther by reason or revelation. In acknowleging Jesus salvation, to be the Christ, he in effect takes him for head and undeter-Lord, and thereby lays himself under obligation to re-mined. ceive whatever truths he can find that Christ has any way reveled, as well as to practife every duty which he has injoined. And it would be fo far renouncing his allegiance to Christ, and disowning his divine mission and authority, to reject any doctrine or precept, that is stamped with Christ's authority. For that would, in all just construction, be to deny him to be the Christ, or a prophet and teacher sent from God. Believing Jesus to be the Christ, is believing the article that is fundamental to being a Christian; and that which distinguishes Christians from Jews, Heathens, Infidels, or men of all other religions. But the knowlege, or explicite belief, of other articles of the Christian Faith, must vary, as mens capacities and opportunities vary. So that the number of fundamentals, in this last fense, cannot be determined; because every Christian almost must have a distinct catalogue of fundamentals, Those, who have more leisure and better capacities, ought to understand and explicitely believe more; but where lesse is given, there leffe will be required. [This is a fair and full answer to what your author has infinuated, p. 114.]-I would further add, that those persons, who live in Heathen or Mahometan countries, and all others, who never had the opportunity to hear of Jesus's being

PART II. being the Chrift, and of feeing the evidences of that fundamental article, can be under no obligations to know, or believe it. For God requires of every man only according to their feveral abilities. But this does not excuse any who may know it if they please, and have fufficient opportunity for inquiring into the nature and evidence of that primary article of Christianity.—Pyrrbo faid, his author had brought fome texts to prove, that all Christians ought to think exactly alike, or maintain an unity of opinion in all the articles of the Christian Faith: And he thought it better to mention them now, than to return to them hereafter .- Theophilus desired that the two texts, which the author had alleged to this purpose, might be taken as a specimen of his great understanding in the Scriptures, or of his integrity and faithfulnesse in the application of pas-The 13th fages quoted from thence. In the former of them, the Apostle is exhorting the Christians at Corintb to unity in one particular point. Your author has left

the Apostle is exhorting the Christians at Corintb to unity in one particular point. Your author has left out.

1 Cor. i. out that sentence, [and that there be no divisions among to. See p. you,] which might have led his reader into the true meaning of the words. The case was this. St. Paul

10. See p. you, ] which might have led his reader into the true meaning of the words. The case was this, St. Paul had planted that church, and when he had tarried with them about two years, he left them. Then it was that a false Apostle got in among them, and broke them into factions and parties, one saying, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos; a third, I am of Cepbas, or Peter; and a fourth, I am of Christ. Now the Apostle's businesse was to reduce them all again under Christ, as their only head and Lord. And with that view he asks them, Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul? They had all been baptized into the name of Christ; and therefore should not have chosen to be called by any other person's name. And, in order to cure them of these unnatural schisms and divisions, he sais (in the text we are now

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confidering) I beseech you, Brethren, by the name of PART II. our Lord Jesus Christ; that name, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth ought to be named, that name in which all Christians ought to unite ;by that name I befeech you to unite; and that, in this respect, you would all speak the same thing, and every one of you fay, I am of Christ, and not of Peter, or Paul, or any other man: And that there be no divisions among you; but be perfectly joined together, upon this head, in the same mind, and in the same judgment.—Now, is this any thing like an injunction to them to maintain an unity of opinion in all fpeculative points; or that, in this fense, they should think all alike?-A thing, which the Apostle knew to be impossible, as long as men see but in part, and know only in part. The other text, which your author has brought to this purpose has no relation to unity of opinion, or their thinking all alike in all points; but relates to unity of affection, or cultivating mutual love, peace, and harmony. Some of the Christians at Rome had been Jews, others Heathers. The Jewish converts had not got rid of their scruples about that distinction of days and meats, which was injoined by the law of Moses. The discourse begins, chap. xiv. 1. and is continued down to chap. xv. 13. In that discourse of the Apostle's, there are other two texts, which your author has misapplied, and which I choose now to explain as they stand in connection, and as there will be no necessity of returning to them hereafter. In The 14th the first, your author represents the Apostle as faying, text exthat " a novice, who might happen to be not yet quite so Plained, " thoroughly in the persuasion, \_[i. e. not so thoroughly i. " convinced of the truth of the Christian religion,] 41. " bim that [in this fense] is weak in the Faith receive. "Yes; but how? Why, to instruct him better; " not by any means to confute or argue with him,not to doubtful disputations." Whereas St. Paul

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PART II. did not fo much as suppose that either the Jewish or Gentile converts, at Rome, were weak in the Faith, as that implies any doubt of the truth of Christianity. But his direct design was to say, " If a Jewish Chri-" flian cannot get over his feruples, with respect to that diffinction of days and meats, which he hath se always been taught to observe, while a Jew, and which is injoined in their law, -though he be in " this fense weak in the Faith, or not fully persuaded so in his own mind of the lawfulnesse of laying aside such distinctions; do not, therefore, reject him, as if he was no Christian; but receive him in a kind and friendly manner. And, as it is " a matter of indifference, do not be perpetually " ingaging him in disputes and controversies about " it, but let him alone peaceably in his own way." Now, here is one clear proof of the Apoftle's allowing variety of fentiments, and that he was far from requiring all Christians to think alike. For fo it follows, ver. 2, &c. One man thinks this way, another that way; Let every man be fully perfuaded in his own mind. And again, wby doeft thou judge thy brother [ for differing in opinion from thee?] Or why doest thou fet at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ; and there every one must answer for himfelf. And, therefore, they were not to judge, or The 15th censure, one another, for difference in opinion. The concluding ver. of that chap, runs thus, He that doubteth is damned, [or condemned,] if be eat; be, 23. See p. cause be eateth not of Faith. For whatsoever is not of Faith, is fin. Here again Faith fignifies the perfuafion of one's own mind, as ver. 1. For, if a Jewish Christian had eaten of meats, forbidden by the law of Moles, as unclean; before he had got rid of his fcruples, concerning the abolishing of the ceremonial law;he must have been justly condemned, because he did not do it of Faith, did not act therein according to the conviction of his own conscience. For

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contrary to the conviction of his own conscience, PART II. is fin, i. e. offensive to God, and exposes a man to condemnation, or punishment. This text is alleged by your author, p. 16. to prove that good works done before Faith fin Christ | bave the nature of fm. Whereas by Faits, here, is not meant a man's imbracing the Christian Faith; for it was spoken concerning persons, who had long ago imbraced the Christian Faith; but Faith, in this text, signifies no more than the conviction, or full persuasion of a man's own mind, which he should never contradict in his practice. And, in the text, which led The 16th me to fay all this, the Apostle prays, that the God text exof patience and confolation would grant them to be like- plained, minded one towards another; not that they might preserve an unity of fentiments, in the bonds of 65. ignorance; or an unity of profession, in the bonds of hypocrify; but an unity of affection; that they might live in peace and mutual love; and neither the Gentile Christians despite the Fewilh converts for their scruples; nor the Jewish Christians think hardly of the Gentile converts, who did not think and act, in that respect, as they did; or who did not make that distinction between days and meats, injoined by their law. The unity here recommended, is otherwise expressed, ver. 2, 3. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification; even as Christ did not please, but deny, bimself, for the good of others.

Pyrrbe turned to p. 4. and faid, " my author re- Obj. III.

"presents one of your rational divines, as saying, that his own reason was the only guide, he could defer pend upon, to come at the knowlege of every thing bis Maker designed he should know. He does, indeed, in other respects, extoll the reason of man; representing it, p. 1. as able to penetrate into any branch of humane science. And, p. 86. he fais, that Mr. Boyle had already experienced a vast

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PART II. " reach and energy in bumane reason, to all other pur-" poses, except that of religion. But, though " reason, in all other affairs, is able to do won-" ders; yet he declares, p. 7. I am fully perfuaded. that the judging at all of religious matters is not the pro-" per province of reason, or indeed an affair where she has any concern. And, accordingly, p. 72, 73. he represents the man, who reasons the worst, as " believing most; and the man, who reasons best. as believing the leaft. And when reason is im-5° ployed about matters of religion, he terms it carat nal wisdom, p. 84. viz. the result of bumane reason, every where industriously decried in the affair of believing. And, upon all fuch occasions, he speaks " of our reason, as weak and imperfect, shallow, empty, vain and delufive; i. e. as good for or nothing at all, nay, as dangerous and mischievous, when imployed about matters of religion. "-Now, whatever views the author might have, 55 in faying these and like things,—we from thence infer, that reason bas nothing to do with Faith: Or, " in other words, that, if reason were to be made 5 use of in matters of religion, it would discover " its flaws, and show that, at the bottom, there is no reason at all to believe the Christian religion. "Thus you have the objection, at large; and I " should be glad, Theophilus, to hear you give a " clear and folid answer to it."-Theophilus said, that the antwer was plain and obvious; but that he must first settle the meaning of the objection. For he apprehended that the author had, in this, as well as many other particulars, mifrepresented the rational divines. He has, indeed, infinuated, p. 4. that the rational divines look upon reason, as Reason not the only guide in matters of religion. So again, p. 40. and p. 56. as if they held, that a man might attain to the belief of reveled truths, by the strength or assistance of bis natural faculties. And fo, in other places. Whereas

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Whereas the rational divines themselves would say, PART II. that Reason is not the only guide, in matters of religion: But that Reason and Scripture are both to be regarded: And that, without the Scriptures, Reaion, or mens natural faculties, could never have found out many things, which are reveled in the Rible. They hold that, as bumane Reason is greatly limited and imperfect, and had been excedingly perverted and abused, revelation came in aid of it, and is a glorious, additional talent, for which they, who have the benefit of it, are accountable; but not those, who have no opportunity of coming acquainted with it. As to Reason, indeed, they cannot allow themselves to blaspheme, or speak evil of it; because they look upon it as the candle of the Lord within them; that gift of God, whereby they are rendered wifer than the beafts The use of of the field, or the fowls of the air. Reason is the Reason in inseparable, as well as peculiar glory, of every intel-matters of ligent being; which was not defigned, like our religion. clothes, to be put on and off at pleasure; but was intended for conftant and perpetual use; and which. we ought to make use of, not only in the affairs of this life, but much more in religious affairs, which are of the highest importance. By our understanding, or reason, we discern the difference between good and evil, truth and falshood. By the use of our Reason, we find out that there is a God, who made the world, and prefides over all; that he is indued with perfect wisdom, goodnesse and power, and therefore we may hope for a revelation from him. By our Reason we are to make trial of what is offered to us as a revelation from God: Otherwife, how could we distinguish between the Koran of Mahomet, and the Bible? By our Reason, we are to judge of the nature and evidence of what is proposed to us, under the notion of a divine revelation; that we may carefully distinguish the true revelation N 2

PARTIL from all pretended and falle ones. In the use of our Reason, or understanding, we are to study that revelation, and find out the fcope and connection. and the meaning of the words and fentences, that we may know what is reveled, or what it contains. For, where there is no idea, there can be no affent, because that would be affenting to nothing; and affenting to nothing, is exactly the fame thing with not affenting at all. Our affent can reach no further than our ideas of what we are to receive, nor properly rife higher than the proofs, or evidences, upon which we are to yield our affent. Again; by our Reason, or understanding, we are to distinguish between the one true interpretation of the Scriptures, and all fuch as are false and groundlesse. Thus Reason and Faith are very good friends, and never clash or interfere, never oppose, or contradict one another. Thus, though the rational divines are reprefented by your author, as holding Reason to be the only guide in the affairs of religion; and your author himself has contended, that Reason has nothing to do in matters of religion; the rational divines hold neither of these opinions. They look upon Reason as one guide, and Revelation another; not as opposed, but mutually aiding one another; both guiding them one way, and leading them to a wife conduct. The advantages of Revelation are many, and unfpeakably great. But it is the proper province of Reason, or the understanding of man, to judge in religious matters; and an affair, of all others, in which Reason has the greatest concern. Indeed, if implicite Faith and blind credulity were the Faith that is required, then he, who reasons worst, or does not think or reason at all, would believe the most. But it is quite otherwise in that religion, which is mens refonable fervice. And the New Testament commands us to prove, or examine all things, that me may bold full that which is good :- Which is a ftrong prefumptive proof, that there are no flaws to be discovered, that

it will stand the test of the most severe scrutiny, PART II. and bear the most strict examination, or, in other words, that there are sufficient reasons for believing the Christian religion: And the more you search and examine, the more you will find of the strength of such reasons, or of the number and goodnesse of such arguments and evidences .- As to the outcry against Reason, as shallow, weak and imperfect, and the like; -that, indeed should put us upon care and caution to guard against judging rashly and precipitately without examination and evidence; and to watch against all falle reasoning, as subversive of Revelation, and of all that is excellent and good. One would, therefore, indeavor to detect and expose it in your author, and in all others; and by reasoning justly, set religion in as clear and amiable a light as one can. to carnal Reason, or carnal Wisdom, -that phrase, of which your author feems fo very fond, by that we are never in Scripture, to understand the result of bumane Reason, [as he does, p. 84.] But the Reason of man trampled upon by fleshly lusts; which is, therefore, justly termed earthly, sensual and devilish: -That is really vain and delusive, good for nothing, nay, dangerous and mischievous, when imployed about matters of religion. But that is, strictly and properly speaking, no Reason at all ; unlesse Reason perverted and abused by sense, appetite and passion, or Reason contradicted, and even destroyed, can still deferve the glorious name of Reason. To sum up the answer to this objection;—if your author, by these ambiguous expressions, means, that Reason is looked upon, by those whom he calls rational believers, as the fole guide in matters of religion, and able to lead men to Faith in Christ, without a revelation; it is calumny and mifrepresentation. If he intends to exclude the Reason, or understanding of man, from all concern in the affairs of religion;

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PART II. if we are not, by our reasoning from the works of creation and providence, to find out that there is a God; to inquire after a revelation from him; to try what is offered to us as a divine revelation; and to judge of the meaning, nature and evidence of it;—then indeed, the rational believers differ widely from him. For by what faculty can we judge of any thing; but by the Reason, or understanding God has given us?

Obj. IV.

God has given us? Pyrrbo proceded and faid, " as to requiring and " commanding men to believe, and threatening them for unbelief; which my author has produced as an objection, p. 8, &c. that I allow you have fully answered; provided your account of Faith be the scriptural account :- Concerning which I fuspend my judgment, and referve it to be con-"fidered, when you give me your arguments in " writing. But there is an objection, p. 9. which " is repeted, p. 69. and which it will require all " your skill to resolve, viz. Can a man be baptized " into a rational religion? Or, where is Reason con-" cerned, when babes accept the terms of salvation by deputy, and are intitled to all the privileges of the " most extensive Faith by another's att? By the baptis-" mal ceremony, they commence true believers at once, " and are made beirs of beaven, by the Faith of their " bondsmen, while as yet they have not the least share " or symptom of understanding themselves; and,—they " cannot well give a rational affent by proxy. Yet " such is the pleasure and ordinance of God bimself in " this point. And p. 69. he inquires, Can any thing be more natural, upon bearing of a rational Faith, than " to interrogate, with the greatest simplicity, after our " church-catechism; -why, then, are infants baptized; when, by reason of their tender age, " they cannot possibly pretend to know any thing of the s matter? - For they article, -without knowing it, to s' believe they know not what: And this act, which is properly

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" properly no act at all, is received as something to all PART IL " intents and purposes complete in itself, and comprizing " the whole sum and extent of a just persuasion. " living longer, to be capable to be informed what it is " they have promised to believe, may possibly indanger, " but cannot add to the terms of their contracted happi-" nesse. The merits of the most finished conviction are " already theirs by imputation. Their claim to beaven " Rands already allowed. And millions are accordingly. " we know, actually saved upon the strength of the mere " ceremony, without ever baving bad the capacity of " exerting one single thought upon that, or any other sub-" jest. So far are they all the while of knowing any " thing why, that they do not so much as know what " they believe; or, indeed, that they do believe any " thing at all.—Now, is not this a most formida-" ble argument against a rational Faith; inaf-" much as you have allowed it impossible to be-" lieve without ideas, or understanding; and con-" fequently impossible to give a rational affent by " proxy?" Theophilus faid, that the objection was founded on a mistaken notion of baptism; and therefore had no force in it. Your author, Pyrrbo, knows very well that some Christians deny infantbaptism; and he had much better have done for than have given up his understanding, and rational Christianity, all at once. But others, who are for infant-baptism, do not suppose any Faith to be required in a child: Tho' they would require it in a Jew, Heathen or Mahometan, upon their coming over to Christianity, in riper years. ceremony may answer different ends upon different subjects, or in the case of different persons. in general, whom John baptized, confessed their required of fins, and were baptized, as penitents, for the re-when they mission of sins. And yet our Savior, who had no are baptizin to confesse, nor any need for repentance, was ed. baptized by John; I suppose, to initiate him into

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PART II., his office, as the great Meffiab. The circumcifion of Abrabam was to him, who was a believer, the feal of the righteousnesse of that Faith, which he had before he was circumcifed. But could not be the feal of Faith unto infants at eight days old. to whom it was nevertheleffe commanded to be administred, merely as the initiating ceremony. Many Christians argue in like manner about Christian-baptism, and suppose that it may signific some things, when applied to the adult, different from what it can fignifie, when applied to infants. To the last they look upon it as a mere initiating ceremony, by which a Christian parent, or sponsor, ingages in a folemn manner to train up that child in what he apprehends to be a rational religion. By that external rite fuch a child is entered into the school of Christ, to be trained up in his religion; that he may learn the nature and evidence of it. as his understanding opens, and be taught to live in all that purity which the outward washing with water denotes, and which Christianity requires .\_ There are forme, who reprefent baptism as absolutely necessary to salvation; who speak of persons as actually faved, upon the strength of the mere ceremony; who make children commence believers upon the imputed Faith of their bondsmen, or furcties; and make the sponfor say, I believe, and it is my defire to be baptized; when he harh no defign to be baptized himself, but hath actually been baptized many years before; who pretend to baptize not with water only, but also with the Holy Gboff; or to connect with baptism the conferring of grace, or of the Holy Spirit; as was actually done, after baptism, by the Apostles; but which no other persons fince have had the power of doing:-But as to those who hold such opinions, and make use of such forms,—let them answer for them. -Such things do not appear to me to be according

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to the pleasure and ordinance of God bimself in this point. Part II. All I can do is, out of a sincere concern for Christianity itself, most humbly to breathe out my wishes and ardent prayers, that such stumbling-blocks may be taken out of the way; and that all parties of Christians would indeavor to cut off occasion from those who are perpetually seeking occasion to blaspheme that Holy Name, by the which we are called! However, the New Testament itself is a stranger to any such sentiments, or practices; and therefore Christianity is not, in the least, affected by this objection.

Pyrrbo with some eagernesse and impatience said, Obj. V. Suppose your answer to be true; yet there is another objection, which my author has glanced at, p. 9. but inlarged upon, p. 11, 12; 102. viz. " If the affent required were to be a rational one, then " Christianity ought not to be taught to children; " for it would be bigbly wicked and unjust to prepossesse " mens tender minds in any manner, before they came " to the full use of their rational faculties. Whereas " parents are commanded to teach their children " religion. Now, fais he, this would be highly par-" tial and unjust, even in parents themselves, upon the " supposition of a rational Faith; for then the offi-" cious piety of what they call education, would be no-" thing else, but the undue cultivation of the most noto-" rious and palpable prejudices. This he calls unfairly " anticipating the strength of the supposed evidence,— " and powerfully retaining them of a party, before " the means of trial are put into their hands. Where-" as, if men were to judge by their reason, this, in-" stead of claiming gratitude for the office, could admit " of no excuse or glosse for the injury. Now, is not " this most acutely urged against those who plead " for laying aside prejudice, cultivating free in-" quiry, and giving a rational affent to Christi-" anity?" Theophilus replied, Some persons, I

PART II. am sensible, think every thing acute, which seems to support or favor Scepticism. However, I can find no acutenesse in the objection, but think it procedes upon suppositions which rational Christians will not allow. Can it be called prepoffeffing the tender minds of children, to teach them, as their understandings open, and reason begins to exert itfelf, the difference between good and evil, the excellence of moral virtue, and that revelation comes in aid of virtue, and greatly promotes it; to point out to them the nature and evidence of true religion, in fuch a plain and familiar manner as is futed . to their capacities. Children may be taught to reason sooner and better than some men imagine; and those parents, who are for a rational religion, do not anticipate, but gradually lay before them, the strength of the evidence, step by step, as they are able to receive it. Bigots and Enthusiasts may dictate as infallible, and take care to represent all future discoveries and alterations as something beyond meafure beinous and detestible, and fancy they have been doing nothing, unlesse they have done that. [See the author, p. 12.] But rational believers will inculcate upon their children, and that early and frequently, to learn to judge for themselves; and as they grow up, to make farther search for the certainty of that knowlege in which they have been instructed, to inquire into the grounds of their Faith, and to be ready to give unto every man, who desires it, a reason of the hope that is in them. Your author has adapted some of the arguments of the church of Rome; and, p. 82; 89. represents an absolute unacquaintance with these matters, as the most effectual security for our inviolable adherence to them; and that ignorance is, in plain terms, the mother of all devotion.—That putting out the eyes of men is certainly the only method in nature to make them fee all alike. With these views, the church of Rome denies the Scripture to the common people, and

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will not allow them to read it in their mother PART II. tongue. But rational believers put the Scripture into the hands of their children, and teach them to read it betimes: that Scripture, where the most rational and excellent doctrine is mixed with the frongest evidence; and the history abounds with the best examples, and the purest and noblest maxims of moral virtue and manly piety. And they Children not only put them upon reading the Scriptures, but should be caution them against the pernicious maxims of the taught to church of Rome, and affert the liberty of private and to judgment, and the inviolable rights of conscience; practise recommending it to them to fee with their own virtue. eyes, and judge with their own understandings: not to give a blind and implicite, but a rational affent, an affent founded upon knowlege and evidence; to prove, or examine, all things, and then hold fast that which is good. This is the way in which the New Testament directs parents to bring up their children. And, if they neglect this office, it can admit of no excuse, or glosse, for the injury. What your author has faid, p. 14. may, with a very little variation, point out the grounds and reasons of such an education. For, suppose the young and tender minds of children were wholly neglected, or left without the care and culture of a religious education,— meantime the powers of darknesse, and their own corrupt dispostions, will be fatally gaining ground upon them every day, long before Faith, or religion, can have raised her forces to come in to their protection, or be qualified in any degree to deal with them. Their passions will be beforehand with their reason, in spite of all her pretensions. babits of vice will be taking deep root the while, unleffe the preparations be expeditious, and the motions of those, to whose care they are committed, be watchful to oppose them; they must needs have got the start in their advances, before religion can, without a proper education and early instructions, bave made any considera-

PART II. ble progresse, in those salutary discoveries, which are to regulate and subdue them. Now, for want of this timely notice, and being early taught the fecret of distinguishing between good and evil, they may, more than probably, have imbarked in wrong measures at setting out, and be lost in the power of babit beyond recovery, before they know where they are. Unprovided of all restraining considerations, and at a loffe for a better guide, they will, most probably, of course give up themselves wholly to their natural biasse, and the law of inclination. And, when they have lived the best part of their lives thus at adventure, and strayed so far without the lessons of some sage counsellor and guide, the excellent rules of Christianity will go near, when they arrive, to find them actually ingaged already, and beyond the power of precept to retrieve. For want of early intelligence, and a religious education, they may be involved in the most borrible degrees of guilt, before they can be better informed: So that, if they have not the benefit of those instructions at first, it will be to very little purpose to bave them at all .\_ Thus I think that, in this as well as many other particulars, what is faid by your auther in one place, may be fairly applied to overthrow what he has faid in another. And I leave every one to judge on which fide the strength of the argument lies.—But those you have mentioned, Pyrrho, are not the only passages in your author to that purpose. For, p. 4. he represents a rational divine as having faid, - That a man could evidently never be jealous enough of opinions contracted by education; that to shake bands fairly with all we had been taught, was the first step to be taken, if ever we meant to be fixed on any rational persuasion. P. 9. The first step towards the use of reason, is to explode, under the name of prejudice, all the effect of our education. And fo, to the same purpose in other places. - From whence one would imagine that he looked upon all prepoffessions in our education, in behalf of a rational

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rational Faith, to be wrong; but that there was no PART II. danger of contracting prejudices on the other fide. and thereby obstructing a due regard to Christianity, suppose it should at last be found true:which was the very case with respect to the Yews and Heathers, when the gospel first appeared in the world, and which rendered it difficult for many of them to fee the evidence in a proper light, and to be duely influenced by it. Men will form some notions in their child-hood, - call them prejudices or prepoffessions, or what you please. And a carelesse or wicked education is as great an obstruction to truth, as can well be supposed, especially such truth as condemns ignorance and vice. And it is of great advantage to have truth and evidence early laid before us, and to be taught to reason closely and If I had learned Euclid's Elements from one of my tutors, when I was young, must I needs be thought to disbelieve it all, when I set my self to examine it over again? There is, indeed, a complication of circumstances to be determined upon, consequences to be regularly drawn, and a summoning of evidence in the case. And yet, notwithstanding there are all these preliminaries to be gone through, the issue may with certainty be foretold, and I may be injoined and prescribed to search and examine, 'till I see evidence to lead to fuch and fuch conclusions. all this, notwithstanding what your author has said, p. 110.] Nor is suspending my judgment, 'till I I have re-examined, any thing like a doubt, or disbelief, of what I had been taught; neither is questioning in religion the same thing with denying, nor suspending one's judgment (though in order to be better informed) ever represented in Scripture, as a professed and criminal opposition. [See the author, p. 101.] On the contrary the Scripture, (as has been often observed) injoins us to prove, or examine, all things, in order to hold fast that which is good, and abstain from every

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PART II. every kind of evil. Pyrrbo interposed and faid, that of for the propositions in Euclid there was demonstration, which there was not for a rational Faith. And therefore the two cases were not parallel. Theophilus answered. That all he designed thereby was to intimate, that there might be cases put where it would be right to teach children one thing rather than another, or rather than not to teach them at all: that fuch an education could not be called an undue prepossessing their minds, unlesse teaching them truth and evidence could be called fo: That he had instanced in a clear case, but that in all other cases, where there was prevailing evidence, the argument would hold, though not fo strongly: That rational Christians apprehend that there is prevailing and abundant evidence of the truth of Christianity; and therefore that is a sufficient warrant for them to teach it to their children. But (fais Theophilus) I do not wonder that some persons talk in the strain they do. For, if they can persuade youth to throw off all the impressions of a religious education, they are an easy prey to them, and will readily and most implicitely become their humble disciples. Whereas, while the impressions of piety and virtue remain, which they have received from their education, it is found to be a more difficult matter to bring them over to infidelity. Well, fais Pyrrho, But do not you allow, Theophilus, that a man ought to return of course to neutrality, the first moment he begins to think for himself? Will not you grant that a man can never be too jealous of opinions contracted by education? Or that the first step towards the use of reafon is to explode, under the name of prejudice, all the effect of our education? You are reckoned to think more freely than many. Why, then, should not you grant these things? Theophilus replied, That he was in principle for mens not taking their religion upon trust, but carefully re-examining all that

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that had been taught them. He thought it was PART II. their duty to be always improving their reason, in order to ratify, or reverse, what their parents had taught them (not as they themselves pleased, or as humor and inclination led them; but) as reason, truth and evidence should fairly determine. But he apprehended there might be danger of a man's renouncing all his principles at once, and being turned adrift, without any principles for his moral and religious conduct. Do not youth owe fo much deference to their parents and friends, who have manifested the tenderest and most affectionate regard to their welfare, as to examine the principles, which they instilled into their minds, one by one, and fee how far they are rational and well-grounded; and which of them is destitute of evidence. and ought to be renounced? Your author often speaks of mere doubting, or suspending one's judgment, though in order to be informed, as com-Must a man, then, needs commencing infidel. mence infidel, before he has examined into the grounds and reasons of Christianity, and seen whether he might not have been a rational Christian? I am in judgment for free inquiry, and would not have men abide by any thing, but what has sufficient evidence of truth and goodnesse. But yet, it appears to me, that a man may be too jealous and suspicious of the principles received by education; - as well as on the other hand too carelesse and negligent about examining. Some have been educated in bigotry and implicite Faith. Their parents, or tutors, have mixed and confounded the fystem of a party, or their own private fentiments, with the pure gospel of Christ; or perhaps represented these things as the gospel itself. Upon finding out such mistakes, they grow jealous and suspicious of every thing that is called Christianity, and so throw off all together. Which is just like throwing away

PART II. gold, because it is mixed with some baser meral:

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or concluding that there is no fuch thing as gold. because they have met with some counterfeit coin. which was paid them as gold, but proves not fo. In such a case, a wise man would be for distinguishing the gold from the drosse, and counterfeit metal. And, when they were separated, he would eafily know which to part with. Again; as throw. ing off Christianity sets a man at liberty from seve. ral rules, which he may (possibly) look upon as so many ties or uneafy restraints; the temptations from riches, ambition, or fenfual pleafures, may make fuch impressions upon his mind, as to cause him to defire to get rid of the principles of a religious education, and from under the check and controul of the rules of the gospel; that he may be more at liberty to follow his own course of life at pleasure, and without disturbance. From thence he is led to cavil at the gospel, and (like men that

In what youth are to be educated, in order to a rational Faith.

believe it themselves) he persuades himself that Christianity is all a fable and delusion, an unnecesfary restraint upon the liberties of mankind, which ought for the future to be treated as the subject of mirth and ridicule, or as romance and fiction.-These are cases which may be supposed. Perhaps they are cases that have actually happened.—There is a real, fixed, and unchangable difference between virtue and vice, good and evil. And, if principles fuch as are the public teachers of Christianity, and all Christian parents and tutors in general, [see the author, p. 96; 99, &c.] would indeavor fairly and fully to state the case of religion, and even of its fundamentals; to lay before them the nature and evidence of it; and the principal objections, together with the folid and rational answers ; - Would they but inure them betimes, not to lift themselves in a party, but to keep their minds open to conviction; \_would

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would they but affure them of their protection and PART II. good-will, as long as they discovered a love to truth and virtue; would they but instill into them an abhorrence of all bigotry; and of every kind and degree of perfecution; would they but cherish in them a fincere benevolence to all mankind; -would they thus teach them not to cavil at this, or contend for that, blindly and implicitely; but to reafon fairly and honeftly, and proportion their Faith to their ideas of what they are to believe, and the reasons and arguments why; - We should not see so many declare for infidelity, without ever having known what Christianity is, or having once carefully examined into the excellence of its nature, and the great strength, compasse, and extent of its evidence. P. 74. your author mentions the case of Julian the apostate, who, in the malice of his heart, probibited the children of Christians from the advantages of a school-education. And one party of Christians were going to try the same method in order to suppresse another.—Your author intimates that, granting them the schools, and giving them full liberty to teach philosophy and the liberal sciences, would have contributed to have ruined the Christians. or quite destroyed their religion. Whereas Julian, in that particular, judged more justly; and faw that, by liberty and free inquiry, Christianity gained ground and triumphed. And schools, that would promote fuch an education as has been mentioned. would cause it to triumph again. The Apostle thought fit to give the Christians this caution, Be- The 17th ware left any man spoil you, through philosophy and vain text, or deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of Col. ii. 8. the world, and not after Christ :- Which was design- See p. 74, ed, most probably, to guard them against the ju- 75. daizing Christians, who had blended the false philosophy of the heathens with their religion. But P

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PART II. the Apostle's caution is as applicable to guard us against all false philosophy, or the narrow principles of a party, and a blind zeal for fystems and prescribed forms, with or without conviction. Bi. gotry, and a party spirit, as well as ignorance and vice, have the most direct tendency to render men unbelievers. But there can arise no danger to truth and virtue from a truly liberal education. or an honest, faithful inquiry and examination.-In feveral places your author feems to argue, as if a man were to give up the principles of education, even though they had been nothing but what were wife and right. But, suppose a man hath been educated in a country where the true religion prevails, and by parents and tutors who have led him into a just and rational Faith; Must he needs look upon himself in the same situation with a native of California, or the Cape, sas your author argues, p. 113.] when he actually is not in fuch a fituation? Are there no advantages of birth and education? There is certainly a difference between knowlege and ignorance; and it is an unspeakable advantage to be early acquainted with the former. But a propenfity to cavil and wrangle, to endlesse distrust and contradiction, is as unphilosophical and unreasonable, as credulity is, on the other hand, or a forwardnesse to assent without examination. - We ought unquestionably to reverse whatever mistakes our parents, or tutors, have led us into; but let us take care not to run too fast, and rashly reverse any thing else. The advantages of a pious and virtuous education, such as rational Christians, according to their own professed sentiments, are obliged to give their children and pupils, are much preferable to any advantages which can be juftly supposed to arise from leaving children without any education at all. - When Theophilus had answer-

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ed this objection, the company broke up for that PART II. time; after Pyrrbo had promised to come prepared with more objections against their next meet-

## II. DIALOGUE

AT their next meeting Crito directed Pyrrho to Obj. VI. procede, without losse of time, to such other objections as he should think proper to allege. Well then (faid Pyrrbo) let us hear what Theophilus can fay to my author's objection, p. 13, &c. viz. "That a rational Faith may not come time enough to " regulate our practice. We ought to believe from " the first setting out in life; Faith ought to be a " constant principle of action; and therefore "there can be no time to deliberate and exa-" mine." Theophilus said that the author had furnished him with the proper answer, in saying, p. 35. It is, indeed, but justice due to the glorious scheme of our salvation, to shew that no such absurd and preposterous project was ever offered to be set on foot in the cause; that the fountain of all wisdom did, indeed, never form, or amuse us with any such strange proposal as, - " Judge whether you have time or not; " judge whether you are judges or not; judge all for " yourselves, and yet judge all alike." And, p. 93. As long as we are thus actually imployed in the fearch, we may make ourselves perfectly easy in that point. God will, on his part, never certainly expect more of us than be inables us to perform. A sincere desire to know and do bis will must supply, 'till bis good time, the deficiency of the actual knowlege. Pyrrho allowed that his author had faid these things; but had withal intimated that they did not amount to a just and full answer to his objection. On the contrary, he had taken away the force of fuch replies, by what he had added, p. 15, &c. from the 13th of the 39 Articles of the Church of England, viz. That good

PARTII. works done before Faith in Jesus Christ, and the inspiration of bis Spirit, are not pleasant to God, but bave the nature of fin. Theophilus faid that, before men are capable of understanding, no Faith can be required of them; any more than reason or virtue can be expected of infants, before they become moral agents: That Christianity does not destroy the religion of nature, but supposes and confirms it; for they perfectly accord, and give mutual help to one another: That if a man act right, according to the best light he has, i. e. either from a regard to the reason and fitnesse of things; or to the will of God, as discoverable by the light of nature; or to the gospel of Jesus Christ; such a conduct must be pleasing to God; but that he was likely to act best who had a regard to all these: and that it was the duty of fuch, as were acquainted with them all, to have a regard to them all. This, he faid, appeared to him to be the voice of right reason :- That, according to the scriptural account, Zacharias and Elizabeth were both righteous before God; though Christ was not yet borne;-Nathanael was an Ifraelite indeed, in whom was no guile, before he believed in Fesus, or had conversed with him: - Cornelius was a devout man and feared God; and his prayers and alms were acceptable to God, before he believed in Christ, or had had the gospel preached unto him. And St Peter hath affured us that, in every nation, be that feareth God and worketh righteousnesse is accepted of him. St. Paul, likewise, hath declared that God will render unto every man according to his works; unto the Jew first, and then unto the Gentile; for there is no respect of persons with God.-And finally, some of the fathers of the Christian Church did not scruple to call fuch men as Socrates and Ariftides, Christians, as well as Abraham and 70b. Pyrrbo intimated that his puthor had farther strengthened the objection, by alleging

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alleging that, " if we may, with a fafe conscience, PART II. " fuspend our judgment, 'till we have searched " and got further information, we may as well " continue to doubt on, and fuspend all our lives. "But, suppose death should overtake us, before " we have finished our inquiry, what apologie can " we make? or what have we to trust to?"

Theophilus replied, that, as to that question, If suspending one's judgment be justifiable any one moment of our lives, who shall tell me what moment it ceases to be 6? The answer was easy and obvious, viz. As soon as you have fufficient evidence, you cease to be justifiable, or innocent, in rejecting it. Suppose fuch persons, as have made an honest use of their reason, and any other advantages afforded them, should die before the nature and evidences of Christianity have been laid before them, or they have had any opportunity to come acquainted with them;—the want of Faith could not be imputed unto fuch persons as a crime. Every man, in being formed a rational creature, has the law of The 18th God writ upon his beart; which arises, not from his text exbeing inspired, as your author contends; but, as plained. St. Paul hath explained himself, by having consci-Rom. ii. ence planted in him. From whence the heathens, See p. 60. who had no written reveled law, like the Scriptures, were led by nature to do the things contained in the law. So that they, having no fuch law, were a law unto themselves; and showed the work of the law to be written upon their hearts, when their consciences accused them for doing wrong, but applauded them for behaving well. As every man has that law of nature writ upon his heart in creation, every man ought to attend to it, or regard the dictates of his own conscience. And when they, who have only that light, attend to it, it is all that can be required at their hands. But, when a man may be acquainted with the na-

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PART II. ture and evidence of Christianity, he cannot be innocent in neglecting to attend to, and examine it; or in refuling to believe and imbrace, and be influenced by it, according to the evidence and importance of it. 'Till then, a man's own heart must condemn him, and much more God, who is greater than his heart, and knows all things. But, when a man has taken due pains to examine, and acts fincerely and uprightly in confequence of fuch an viz. 1 Joh. inquiry, then he may hope for the Divine approiii. 20,21. bation: For if our bearts condemn us not, we must needs have a just confidence towards God.

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Obj. VII.

Pyrrho went on and faid, "If natural religion " be fufficient, unto fuch as have no opportu-" nity to come acquainted with the gospel, what " are become, in the mean time, of all the privileges of the pale? Where are the mighty advantages of " inlisting in the chosen flock; if this beaven be once or prefumed thus equally capable of admitting out-lyers upon the same footing, and allowed a common recep-" ticle for the Partifans on both sides of the question? " [See the author, p. 44, &c.] And he fais upon " this supposition, there had been very little need of the expense of a miracle for the reducing of St. Paul to the state of Christianity and Apostleship, who might, " according to this account, have succeded just as well in the quality of Saul the persecutor. And he returns to this objection again, p. 94. and fais, " If we can disbelieve (as they term it) with a safe conscience, we shall do as well without it, as with Theophilus answered, that the the blind are not obliged to fee; yet those who have good eyes, and thut them against the light, or neglect to make a right use of them, are culpable. In like manper, those, who labor under invincible ignorance, or any natural impediment, are quite out of the cale, and may be justly reckoned among the fincere unbelievers, who have just exceptions to any Faith's being required

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being quired required of them. But all those who reject the PART II. gospel, when fairly laid before them, and the evidences stated in a clear and distinct manner, must ger of inbe reckoned among the wilfully obstinate and disobe-fidelity. dient. I do not pretend to determine, as to particular persons, which ought to be ranked among the one fort, or the other. But God is judge of the case; and will not admit Partisans of the last. fort, when he comes to dispense rewards to every man according to his deeds. He will then make a remarkable distinction between such as have imbraced truth and attended to evidence, and such as have hated the light, and turned away their eyes from it.—Saul the persecutor verily thought that The 20th he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus text exof Nazareth. And, as far as he acted according to plained, the present dictates of his own conscience, he did xxvi. 9, right. But it was his great crime, that he did not &c. See first examine into the truth and evidence of the P. 46. gospel, before he ingaged in persecuting the protesfors of it. It was, indeed, a considerable mitigation of his crime, that be did it ignorantly, and in unbelief. Had he done it maliciously and contrary to his own conscience, I do not suppose that a miracle would have been worked for his conversion. The conversion of But, as it was, the expence of a miracle was highly Saul. proper, and the confequences of his conversion vey considerable. For he thereby, instead of a plague, became an unspeakable bleffing, to mankind. And, as to himself, bis first zeal and behafor was far from being equally meritorious; fince it was a zeal without knowlege, and therefore defecive in a grand point.—Though he was prevailingly incere, yet not intirely fo; his happinesse, thereore, must have been greatly diminished by such a raw-back upon his virtue, or so great a blemish in is character.—The privileges of being within the al, are evident, if it be allowed to be an advan-

PART II. tage to be educated, in this country or family, ra:

ther than that; or to have good instructions, and pious and virtuous examples, rather than the contrary. Have not Christians plainer rules and better instructions than the rest of mankind? And, are not these excellent rules inforced by the most rational motives and the strongest fanctions? By becoming a Christian, Saul was convinced of the great evil of perfecution, he saw his duty in a clearer manner, and was inabled to make a much greater progresse in true holinesse, and consequently was The Chri- prepared for a more exalted flate in glory. For, though in every nation, he who feareth God and worketh righteousnesse, will be accepted of him; yet the Christian beaven will be sufficiently distinguished, if Christians, in proportion to their superior advantages, excel in knowlege and virtue. In

> that case, they could not do as well without the Christian revelation, as with it; because that, well improved, will of course prepare them for higher degrees of glory and felicity in the future state of recompence,

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Obj. VIII.

My author (said Pyrrho) has another formidable objection, p. 10, &c. " concerning men's " praying for the obtaining, confirming, and in-" creasing their Faith ; and asks this question, .. In what light must a rationalist regard all application to beaven, by prayer, for such a purpose? For, if Faith is to be obtained and confirmed by the " use of our reason, he infinuates that all prayer is vain and ridiculous. Or, if we are to pray for the increase of our Faith,—there is a strong presumption that our labors of every other kind were to be spared throughout the whole progresse; and that it was to be introduced after a like manner, by methods purely divine, and without any of our affiftance, or any indeavors and pains of our own." Theophilus observed, that some Enthusiasts had pretended, that God was to do all for them, without any labors, indeavors,

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indeavors, or care of their own. But rational PART II. Christians have discouraged such an opinion, and earnestly recommended it to mankind to use the powers and faculties which God hath given them, and likewise to pray for successe and a bleffing from God; in whose hand, and at whose disposal, all events are. Nor do they disavow all future use of reason for their security, but desire the continuance of their reasonable powers, and that with a full purpose and resolution ever to make use of them. However he faid, he believed that many Christians, as well as others, had mistaken the notion of Prayer, and the great end and delign of it; though Christianity itself is quite innocent, and gives no grounds for such a mistake. We ought to consider that when we pray, it is not for the fake of any benefit of God's, but our own. We do not pray to inform him, or to move him to depart from any of his wife measures of conduct. But our defign ought to be to cultivate in ourselves such a temper of mind and course of life, as may render (a) See us most acceptable to the Deity. (a) The Apostles the End said unto their Lord, Increase our Faith. He had, and Design in the preceding verses, been indeavoring to in- of Prayer. crease their charity. And, after Jesus had worked to a friend. several miracles himself, and given the Apostles 2d edition. power also to work miracles, yet they very unrea- The 218 fonably continued to doubt, ever now and then, text exof his power to work any more miracles; upon plained, which he had, before this, very justly reproved Lukexvii. them as persons of little Faith: They being con- 5. See p. scious of this, and perhaps fearing such another reproof, addressed themselves to him to the following purpose, "Now you have taught us our duty " in that respect, and increased our charity; Lord, " increase our Faith also." If, by Faith, be here signified a mere act of the understanding, or the bare affent of the mind, then increase of evidence, or 2

PART II. more clear perception upon a greater attention to the evidence already afforded, is the only accession to be made to a rational persuasion: And it is very probable that this was their meaning, "Lord, " exert your divine power in giving us fome further evidence of your being able to affift us in working miracles." Jesus by his answer intimated that, if they duely attended to the evidence he had already afforded them, it was fufficient to induce them to believe he could inable them to perform the greatest miracles. Though he did not fay, he would grant them no more. On the contrary, he afterwards worked many more miracles, in their presence, and thereby answered their petition, and increased their Faith. This seems to have been the fense in which the Apostles prayed, Lord, increase our Faith. But, suppose we were to make use of the same petition, we might do it very rationally, and that to the following purpose, " Lord,

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We may rationally pray, Lord, increase our Faith.

" preserve us in the right use of our faculties, continue to us our reasonable powers, and the means of knowlege and conviction which we already have, that we may examine more carefully the " nature and evidence of all true religion, and of more clearly perceive their force and excellence.

" Or grant us what further evidences thou shalt " fee proper, either from the continued vigor and right use of our own faculties, the instruc-

tions of pious and learned men, or by any other " gracious affiftance that is confiftent with thy

" wife method of governing moral agents, or " which thou shalt fee proper for us in our pre-

" fent state of trial and imperfection. Deliver us from all criminal prejudices, from all biaffe of

" wrong affections, from an undue regard to " men, or to the things of this prefent world, and

" from all that aversion to truth which arises from

" a love to vice. May we love truth and fearch ss after 1 to

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" after it, with care and diligence, as for hid trea- PART II. " fure; may we readily imbrace it, boldly and " fleadily professe it, and be influenced by it in all " our ways. And may we continually be grow-" ing in this virtuous and amiable disposition of " mind, 'till at last we attain the end of our Faith, " even the falvation of our fouls." Now, what is there ridiculous in fuch a prayer? Or how is it any way inconsistent with the use of our reason, or with our own labor and diligence in reading the Scriptures, and fearthing into the grounds of our Faith, that we may not only believe, but be confirmed and established therein more and more?

My author, fais Pyrrho, has an objection, p. 46. Obj. IX. which will shake one of your strong bolds, Theophilus. " I remember you talked fo much and fo plaufibly " about the miracles worked by Jesus Christ and his " Apostles, and represented them as so many in num-" ber, so various in their kinds, and performed in so. " many different places; you fet the evidence of " Christ's resurrection in so lively a manner before " mine eyes; and placed the argument from the " great and astonishing plenty of spiritual gifts, " miraculous powers, after Christ's ascension, in " so strong a point of light; that, if I had not "been professedly of the doubting feet, I should "have been moved to pay some regard to such "evidence. But my author has made me easy, by faying, that miracles have, time out of mind, been undoubtedly performed, as well in favor of false doctrines; and therefore can never be singly, and of themselves alone, any certain marks of a true. This the Scripture itself confesses, when it warns us of lying wonders and false Christs, &c.". Theophilus oberved that the author was very often fanguine without vidence, and apt to doubt where the evidence was bundant. He roundly affirms that miracles bave, me out of mind, been undoubtedly performed in favor

PARTII. of false dostrines. As judicious men have very much doubted of the truth of that fact, multitudes of the pretended miracles of the church of Rome have been found out, and shown to be mere impostures and delusions. And Dr. Sykes, in his late discourse on miracles, hath made it appear that Moses never ascribes what the Magicians of Egypt did, to evil sprits, or to any invisible and miraculous power. Nor will your author's quotations

The 22d and 23d texts explained. z Theff.ii. o. Mat. XXIV. 24.

from Scripture prove what he afferts, to be undoubted. For by lying wonders, the Apostle meant pretended miracles. And as to false Christs and false prophets, they did arise and delude the people. But that theirs also were lying wonders, will easily appear from confulting Josephus and other authors, -Pyrrho asked, " whether there was not sufficient See p. 46. " historical evidence for several such miracles?" Theophilus faid, the evidence did not appear any thing like fo full and fatisfactory to him, as that for the miracles of Jesus and his Apostles. They were neither fo clearly predicted, nor fo fully confessed by adversaries, nor attended with such remarkable circumstances. But, suppose there were a case, in fome respects so circumstanced, as that we could not come at the bottom of it, this ought not to invalidate the evidence for all the miraculous operations ascribed to Jesus and his Apostles ;- any more than a court of judicature could wifely and justly reject the evidence of feveral faithful witnesses; because one or two, who had by others been accounted faithful and credible men, had proved guilty of perjury (a) .- Pyrrbo inquired further, " whether particular institutions both in Pa " ganism and Popery had not been introduced, of " fupported, by miracles?". Theophilus faid that the cases were by no means parallel. For, how different a thing is it to carry on fuch pretenfions where the magistrate and the power of a nation favor them.

(a) See Bp. Butler's Analogy, &c.

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them, and it is dangerous to pry and examine too PARTII. closely; in comparison of a number of poor men, not educated in the schools, nor acquainted with the world, gaining credit all their lives after, and. bringing over numerous converts, in opposition to all the malice of the Priests, the ridicule of men of wit, and the power of the lords and rulers of the earth; who were all disposed to have discovered the cheat, if there had been any; and who had fufficient power to have examined things to the bottom? How did the French prophets dwindle away, when Dr. Emms failed to rife again, as they had pretended he would? And what better could Jesus or his Apostles have succeeded, if their miracles had not been real? The Roman magistrate was as jealous, and the Jews more malicious against them; and yet they could not prove one cheat among fuch a number of miracles as were ascribed to Jesus and his disciples.—As to what your author alleges of miracles not being fingly, and of themselves alone, any certain marks of a true doctrine; - tis an hard matter to know to what purpose he has said that; when he foon after confesses, that it is, indeed, the most, that their strongest advocates insist upon, in behalf of their weight and interest in the question, that they concur only in contributing their part with other evidences. And rational divines do not teach men to rest on one argument, fingly and alone, for the foundation of their Faith; but affert that it is fufficient if two, or three, or all the arguments in conjunction produce, or effect, a rational affent to Christianity. There is one thing, which your author has mentioned in this place, that feems to contradict the main design of his book, viz. that the Scripture sends us to trace analogies, and confult more known relations, &cc. to have recourse to a surer standard, and even to call in the aid of moral

PARTII. ral confiderations. Surprizing! That the Scripture. which never appeals to our understandings, should fend us to trace analogies, &c. That, though the judging at all of religious matters is not the proper province of reason, or indeed an affair where she has any concern; yet we must judge of analogies, and consult more known relations; have recourse to a surer standard, and even call in the aid of moral confiderations .- And that the Scripture fends us to do all this. Surely, the good man had forgot himself; and other people will, even from his concessions, be ready to conclude, that the Scripture directs men to reason upon evidence and recommends a rational Faith. But these things, I suppose, slipt from him unawares, and proceded from his great eagernesse to overthrow the evidence of miracles, which Christians generally look upon, Object. X, to be very considerable.

Then Pyrrhe, with some confusion in his countenance, went on thus; " My author, p. 47. has re-" presented miracles as natural effects of gospel-be-" nevolence: And fais, that all this wonderful and miracu-" lous evidence—was indeed, in strictnesse, but the na-" tural effect of their doctrine: [i.e. the doctrine of " Fefus and his Apostles, instead of any supernatural of proof of its veracity. Now, from hence I would " willingly form an objection against the proof of "Christianity, which you deduce from miracles. But really I am here quite at a loffe, and cannot conceive what my author means. For suppose the casting out " demons, and the bealing of the fick, to be things of the " most beneficial tendency, and futable instances of that " univerfal benevolence they were recommending; yet, " what then!-If they miraculously cast out de-"mons, and healed the fick, Theophilus will allege, "they must have had such a power, otherwise " their benevolence could not have produced " fuch effects, nor could fuch benefits have rifen

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" to any. And, if they had fuch a miraculous PART II. " power, and exerted it in fuch a number and " variety of inftances, I know, you will further " infer, that it must needs have greatly tended to " establish their mission and doctrine. So that I " here give up my author, as too refined for me; " or, to speak plainly, quite unintelligible."-Theopbilus faid, let your author mean what he will, I am well fatisfied it could not affect the truth of Christianity, or overthrow a rational Faith. But I am not obliged to find out a meaning for a man who writes fo obscurely; and especially where his friend Pyrrbo, who has studied him so much, has A connecgiven him up. But this I will observe that, tion bethough I do not understand how miracles of any tween the kind could be the natural effects of any doctrine, how and mirarational and benevolent foever; yet it is evident cles of there is a propriety in our Lord's miracles, and a Jesus. remarkable connection between them and the doctrine he taught: He, who professed to cure the diseases of mens minds, actually cured the diseases of their bodies. He, who came as a light unto the world, and to give light to the understandings of those who sate in darknesse, miraculously opened the eyes of the blind. He, who came to rouse mens attention to the best things, actually unstopped the ears of the deaf. He, who brought glad tidings of great joy, and preached the gospel of peace, worked many beneficent miracles as the Prince of Peace, who came to fave mens lives, and not to destroy. He, who declared he had power on earth to forgive fins, cured the difeases that had been caused by sin: and it was all one, in that case, to forgive the fin which had been the cause of the disease, or to cure the disease which had been the punishment of the fin. He, who affured them that he had power to raise all mankind from the dead at the last day; and in that sense, and upon that-

Obj. XI.

PART II. that account, was the refurrection and the life; did, as the most proper proof and specimen, actually raise several dead persons to life again.—These were, indeed, proofs and effects of very great and extensive benevolence; but they were withal, at the same time, the clearest proofs of his having an extraordinary and miraculous power;—to which he often and justly appealed in proof of his divine

mission and doctrine.

Pyrrbo proceded to another topic, on which sceptical men generally take care to declaim. His author had but just touched upon it, but that was fufficient to give him an handle to inlarge, from what he had heard, or read, elsewhere. " find, fais he, that my author, p. 61. has fome doubts arising from the various readings, and ininuates that the Scriptures are corrupted. He " intimates that fuch manuscript authorities and paper " revelations want repairs; that multiplied transcripts are only copies and representations at second band; that " fuch a work must be liable, from a thousand causes, to fall sbort, and deviate from its great exemplar. " And, that we might not misunderstand him, he adds, the opposers of the gospel say, indeed, that this is the case; and insist strongly that the sacred text bas been actually much adulterated: and be " will not take upon bim to contradict them. " member, Theophilus, that, towards the conclu-" fion of the first part of our defign, you were " very earnest in proving the truth and genuine-" nesse of the books of the New Testament; but " you did not touch upon the objection arising " from the various readings." Theophilus, replied, that he did not take that to be any objection, but the contrary. The matter (as it appears to me, fais he) is plainly this.—Printing was not invented till many hundred years after Christ; and therefore the books of the New Testament (like all other

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other antient books) were transcribed, that copies PART IL. might be multiplied, and various churches and particular persons might have these books to peruse as they wanted, or chose. Now, from any books being frequently transcribed, various readings will arise of course. And it is faid, that Dr. Mill collected above 30,000 various readings, in the books The variof the New Testament.-What then !- The more ous readfrequently any book is transcribed, the further it New Teforeads, and the better it is known, fo much the flament more easily might it be proved to be false and confirm counterfeit, if it were really fuch. To bring this the genuas an objection against Christianity, or against the books. the books of the New Testament, appears to me to be quite ridiculous. The vast number of copies, collected with fo much expence and induftry, and collated with so laudable a curiosity and diligence, inflead of weakening, afcertains the truth of Christianity, and establishes it beyond all reasonable doubt. We find, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14. That, in the days of king Jofiah, Hilkiab the priest found, in the house of the Lord, a book of the law of the Lord, given by Moses. The adverfaries of revelation have been ready to triumph upon this, as if the whole was a forgery of Hilkiah. (a) It is very probable, indeed, that copies of (a) See Dr. the law were then very scarce, and that this found Clarke's by Hilkiah was, to his furprize, an authentic and Boyle's Leoriginal copy. But that the whole should have 424. been, at that time, a forgery of Hilkiah's, is evidently impossible; because the very being and polity of the nation, as well as their religion, was founded upon the acknowledment of the law of Moses. And, to confirm these observations, we find that, in a foregoing reign, 2 Chron. xvii. 7, &c. the king fent to the princes to teach in the cities of Judab, and with them be sent Levites ; and they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the

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PART II. the Lord with them; and went about, throughout all the cities of Judab, and taught the people. If it could have been proved that there was only that one copy of the books of Moses, at that time; how would our adversaries have infinuated, or rather roundly affirmed, that it was all a forgery of some crafty prieft, or some artful, deligning man? though that could not have been certainly, or justly concluded from thence. The like objection would have been equally applicable to the New Testament if, when printing was invented, there had been found but one copy. Then, indeed, there would have been no various readings: But notwithstanding that, the true friends of revelation would have wished and inquired for a second copy, and a third, and fo on; to give more authority to the facred books, and to render the text more fecure and exact. For it might have been asked, " if these were the books which contained the re-" ligion of the Christians, and Christianity had " fuch a vaft spread all over the then known world, " how came it to paffe that they had so few copies of their grand charter?" The number of copies and antient versions, collected from various and distant parts of the world, from Europe, Asia, and Africa, is the most effectual answer to such an objection. This is so apparent that they would gladly raise an objection from the very great number of copies, which (instead of an objection) must certainly turn out greatly in favor of Christianity .-Pyrrbo interposed here, and said, "does not such a " vast variety of readings render the text of scripture precarious?" Theophilus answered, that Crito had promised to help him out, where critical learning was required; and therefore he begged of him, that he would give them an account of what he had observed in that respect. Crito would have excused himself, by pleading that he was in the chair,

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chair, and that it did not become him to meddle, PART II. any further than to keep order. But Pyrrbo thought this one of his firong bolds, and wanted Crito's opinion concerning it. And, as they feemed both fo desirous that he should give them his fentiments, he was willing to gratify them, and faid.—He had spent some of his leisure hours in examining into that matter, and had not only observed what some others had done in that affair; but had confulted all the various readings, which Dr. Mill and Kufter had collected upon nine of the books of the New Testament, and designed to go through all the rest. I find, fais he, that Dr. Mill has not only collated several antient manuscripts, but has also collected a multitude of various readings from the Greek and Latin Fathers for 500 years after Christ; as likewise from several antient versions, and some printed copies. As to the The vari-Fathers, they feem frequently to have quoted texts our readof Scripture by memory; or merely to have al-ings not fo luded to fuch and fuch passages; or to have given has been the fense, without being scrupulous about the thought. words. As to the translations, Dr. Mill has confessed, that he did not understand four of the most celebrated oriental versions. He therefore took the leveral readings in them from a Latin translation, which in many places is not a literal rendering of those versions. And it is well known that translators commonly take a liberty to expresse the sense, without a literal rendering of the words. And, therefore, we are not to infer that, when a verfion expresses some thought in a different manner, therefore the original itself was different from the present, or common reading; much lesse can we infer that from a translation of a translation. Again; it ought to be observed that either Dr. Mill, or his friends who collated them, have been guilty of some errors and omissions in their quot-R 2

124 PART II. ing the antient manuscripts, versions, and fathers, as well as have formetimes reckoned the fame copy twice. or under two different names. Nor is it any wonder at all that, in fuch a long, laborious, and difficult work, there should be some slips and mi-(a) See stakes, considering that (a) every difference of Dr. Bent- spelling in the least word or article of speech, or ley's Phile- in the order of placing the words, without any Lipfienfis, real change, has been industriously registered. p. 64, &c. Now take away the dublous readings which arise from the foregoing miltakes, and the number of

different readings will be greatly diminished. Again there are a multitude of various readings. mentioned by Dr. Mill and Kufter, which make little or no difference as to the fense. To give the English reader some notion of this, I might produce that phrase [our Lord Fesus Christ ;] which is in some copies Jesus, in others Christ, in others Jefus Chrift; some have it Jefus Christ the Lord, fome read our Lord; some, the Lord Jesus Christ,

and some again our Lord Jesus Christ, and finally, fome perhaps read differently from all thefe. Now, confider how often that expression occurs in the New Testament, and in what a variety these words may be used, and you may easily ima-

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gine how incredible a number of different readings must arise, merely from the variation of that phrase; and yet the sense will be much the same, take which of them you please all could give more such instances, but Il forbear - Other antient

authors of a smaller fize than the New Testament, would have many more various feadings, if we had an equal number of manuscripts and versions of them, as plainly appears from collating the

few copies which now remain. And yet the text of those authors is sufficient to give the sense, in

general, to the great fatisfaction of learned men; -who would, neverthelesse, be glad to have more various e,

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various readings, in order to render them more Past II. correct.—Your author brings in the opposers of the The text gospel, as insisting strongly upon it, that the sacred text notadultebas been actually much adulterated. I apprehend that rated; but the charge is false. They ought not to talk thus ascertainin general; but point out the particular places, ed, by the where such corruptions have been made, And, readings, then, they will foon find that learned men will detect their mistakes, and settle the true reading, in all points of moment, in the same manner that is done in Terence, Virgil, or Tully. The New Testament is in a much better condition than the classic authors, and has suffered lesse injury, by the hand of time, than any profane author of equal antiquity. However, for my own part, I heartily wish that Dr. Bentley's Greek Testament may be published, imperfect as it is: And that Wetstein may live to finish and publish his also. For truth can never 11 10 fuffer, but always gains ground, by examination. Nor ought the mere mistake of a transcriber to be Mistakes termed an adulteration; when either the scope of easily rethe place, or the next copy you meet with, shows it to have been no more than a flip of the pen, or a mere innocent and undefigned mistake. Gentlemen do not act fairly, in going on to throw out fuch general infinuations. If they would do any thing to purpose, they ought to prove, by an induction of particular inflances, that the various readings have rendered the facred text fo precarious, as to alter one article of Faith, or one rule of worship or practice. However the fact is, that the various readings have not extinguished the light of any one chapter, or fo disguised Christianity, but that every feature of it remains the fame as ever.—Since this is known to be the case by all who are acquainted with this fort of learning, the objection taken from the various readings can have no weight with men of candor and true folid learn-

ing:

Part II. ing: But (as Theophilus hath observed) the multitude of copies and translations, wrote in various
ages, and collected from many and very distant
parts of the world, must be one signal evidence in
favor of Christianity: And, instead of rendering the
books themselves of uncertain authority, or the
sacred text precarious, - the books must, on that
very account, be of more established authority,
and the sacred text ascertained with greater clearnesse and certainty. Theophilus thanked Crise
for his kind assistance on this head. And Pyrrho, having enough of this argument, desired leave to defer
the mention of any more objections till they met
the next evening.

## DIALOGUE III.

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Obj. XII. PYRRHO began this evening's conference, by faying, "that his author had taken notice, p. 48. of Jesus's being upon the reserve, in work-" ing miracles, whenever be happened among unbeliev-" ing company: And, p. 68. of his being fo particu-Larly cautious of exposing bis person after his resurrection to any but his friends.-I defign hereafter to call upon Theophilus to give an account of of these particulars. But such infinuations have led me, at present, to make another objection, " viz. Suppose the books of the New Testament " to be genuine, and that the various readings do " not render the facred text precarious :- Yet all " this is only the testimony of friends. And what dependence can one have on persons who were themselves parties, and concerned to promote " the foread of Christianity in the world? The testimony of an enemy would be of weight; but we ought to be upon our guard, when the parties themselves bear record to the cause which "they have espoused." \_Theophilus had, formerly, with

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with aftonishment heard this objection from PART II. others; but now very coolly faid to Pyrrbo; Sir, if you had turned this as often in your mind as I have done, perhaps the difficulty would have vanished, and you would have spared me the labor, of answering such an objection. You say, the testimony of an enemy would be of weight: Pray, what testimony do you expect from enemies? Pling. Suetonius, Tacitus, and other authors mention the Christians as numerous in the times of the Casars, as well as afterwards; and describe them as taking their name and religion from Jesus Christ. Celsus, Porphyry, Julian, the Jewish Talmud, and the Coran of Mahomet, all allow that Jesus worked miracles; and the last of these ascribes to him miracles of various kinds, and even acknowleges that he raised the dead. Methinks, these are very considerable testimonies from enemies. But suppose we had no fuch acknowlegements; must we reject all direct and positive evidence, 'till enemies will vouchsafe to bear testimony to what makes against themselves? Let us closely consider the objection.—You None but would have a full and faithful account of the doc- None our trine and miracles of Christ, from his enemies; - could be are not you unreasonable in expecting any such expected thing? Would you think it necessary to your re- to have. putation, as an honest man, to have your charac-wrote a ter first attested by your enemies, before you would count of desire your friends should believe it? Let us suppose Christithe things related in the gospel to be facts,—that anity. Jesus taught such a doctrine, and worked such miracles; and could you reasonably expect a faithful history of these things from his professed enemies, continuing such? Would not that be, in effect, a man's writing an history, fairly and honestly, to condemn himself? Would not all the world be ready to cry out against him, and say, "Do you "know that Jesus preached so excellent a doctrine,

" and

PART II. " and do you allow him to have worked fo many

and fuch great miracles, and yet continue not to believe in him; nay, even his open and pro-" fessed enemy?" Surely, no man of any fense or modesty would write such an history, which would fo directly turn to his own confusion. And, if the friends of Jesus be the most proper, nay, the only persons, that can rationally be supposed to have wrote fuch an hiftory, who could be more proper than the Apostles themselves, and their intimate friends and companions, who were eye and ear-witnesses to many of the things which they relate? A circumstance which cannot be affirmed of many celebrated bistorians, whose histories are neverthelesse of great esteem and credit; but this circumstance ought greatly to add to the credibility of the gospel-history. I might also observe, that the testimony of Saul and other persons, who, from enemies and persecutors, became Christians, was in some sort the testimony of enemies. And further; we have, in effect, an appeal to enemies, in the Epistles of St. Paul, and particularly in his (a) See Bp. two Epistles to the Corintbians (a). A letter, di-Butter's rected to a whole church, has some marks of being Analogy, genuine, not merely beyond a letter writ to a fingle person, but above that of an historical narrative, left to the world at large. There was in the church of Corinth, a falle Apostle, who was a bitter enemy of St. Paul, and had raised a considerable party, or faction, in that church against him. And the Apostle wrote to them, and afferted that he had an Apostolic commission; and that; as a proof of it, the signs of an Apostle had been wrought among them, in that he performed several kinds of miracles there; that that very church which he himself had planted, abounded with spiritual gifts and miraculous powers, which they had received from him. These things he speaks of, as well

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known facts, concerning which his enemies could PART II. have no doubt. He reproves them as persons who without question had such gifts; and had greatly abused them; he depreciates such gifts in comparison of moral virtues, and speaks of those miraculous powers in the fame easy, affured manner, that any one would speak to another of a thing that was as familiar and as well known to them, as any thing in the world. Now, would a man of common fense have talked so among enemies, who would have taken pleafure in exposing him, and in over-turning all his labors, if these things had not been fact? The like things might be observed, as to the Epistle to the Galatians. Here, then, we may perceive fome peculiar advantages in some of the facred books being writ by way of letters. For, though to an inattentive person they may appear to be merely occasional writings, in which none, but those they were directed to, can have any concern: - Yet they are calculated for the most extensive and general use. And, from hence we have, in effect, the attestation of enemies, or an appeal to them, for the miraculous evidences of Christianity, which then abounded among them. Nor must I omit the following fine observation, viz. That these two Epistles to the Corinthians afford a proof of Christianity detached from all the rest; which is a thing of weight, and also a proof of a nature and kind peculiar to itself.

Pyrrho again objected and said, "If the Christian Obj.XIII, "religion be so excellent and rational in itself, and was attended with such abundant evidence, at its first publication, how came it to passe that it then labored under all that contempt in the eyes of the lettered world; and that some Christians, and even very learned men, have looked upon Reason and Scripture to be utterly repugnant to one another? [See this objection urged by my author,

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PART II. " p. 70, &c."] Theophilus said, he supposed that no man would dare to fay but that there has always been a false philosophy and a false kind of learning, as well as a true. And, as to the lettered world, continued he, when the gospel made its appearance, you may call them philosophers, orators, or what you please; but though some few, in many respects, thought and spoke justly; yet several of them had fuch notions of God and providence, and a future state, as appear to be the most weak and filly, ridiculous and abfurd; and were, likewife, men of very immoral characters. These were the children of this world, who were more tenacious of absurdities, and more affiduous in their vicious perfuits, than pious and virtuous men frequently are in adhering to truth and the practice of righteoufnesse, which are things of infinitely more importance. And, therefore, it might be justly faid, The 24th that the children of this world are wifer in their generaand 25th tion than the children of light.—They were, indeed, wife men after the flesh, and theirs was the wisdom from Luke xvi. beneath, which is carnal, earthly, sensual and devilish. 8. Jam. No wonder, therefore, that fuch wisdom should be foolishnesse with God; or that it should be said, con-See p. 72, cerning such men, that God thinketh not as man thinketh, inafmuch as what is highly esteemed among The 26th, men is frequently an abomination in the fight of God; 27th and or that the world, by fuch a fort of wisdom, knew explained, not God. For what could be more ridiculous than

men, as the Apostles, might be looked upon as vain

bablers, in comparison of the lettered world; though

the gospel might be termed the foolishnesse of preach-

ing, and be thought incapable of reforming and

texts explained, iii. 15. viz. 1 Cor. their absurd notions, and superstitious or wicked Luke xvi. around the men, by the world 15. 1 Cor. around them, might be thought to have the most i. 21. See perfect knowlege of God, virtue, and a future state,

p. 70, &c. and to bid the fairest for happinesse; and such

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faving mankind, or of making them to renounce PART W. temporal things with a view to everlasting happinesse; - though with men, I say, this was impossible; The 29th yet with God all things are possible. He can raise up and 30th men the least likely, and by them give mankind plained, the best notions of virtue and happinesse. Such Mat. xix. persons, indeed, could never approve of false phi- 26. Eph. losophy, false religion, or vice. No; they bad not iv. 20. See so learned Christ. But all true, moral philosophy, P. 71, 72. all right notions of God, providence, and a future state, fell in with the Christian revelation, and was thereby supported and confirmed. But that the conceited philosopher, who doated upon his idle, groundlesse speculations; the orator, who was fond of words and phrases, fine cadences, and well-turned periods; and in general, all that were devoted to wice, and resolved to continue in it;—that such, I by, should reject the gospel, is nothing wonderful. Such men do not eafily part with their prejudices And the lettered world are generally more prejudiced than others. Some men, who have had a very great name for profound and uncommon learning, have entertained as many groundlesse notions, and lived as bad lives, as their inferiors among the common people. The wisdom of these men, therefore, must so far be folly; and an opposition to the gospel from such principles, no other than profane and vain babling, and oppor The 318 sition of science fally so called. Persons of a meaner text exeducation, or of inferior, natural, or acquired talents, plained, might be much more humble and teachable, and 1 Tim. vi. have a greater relish for truth and righteousnesse; 4. and consequently be much better prepared for imbracing the gospel.—As the philosophers were tenacious of their groundlesse opinions, and the great men dazzled with the pomp and grandeur of the world; it is not to be admired, that not many wife men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many

religion,

fiftent.

PART II. noble, imbraced the gospel, when it was not attended with the riches, honors, and glories of this world. And fome learned men among the Chriflians have talked as weakly, about the inconsistency between reason and religion, as if they had meant to betray religion, and give the greatest advantage to its enemies; though I believe, that was far from Reasonand their intention. Bp. Beveridge hath affigned it as a reason for his believing one article of Faith, that not inconbe could not conceive, or understand it. And of another he fais, If I could not believe it to be true; I should, therefore, have the more cause to believe it to be fo. One of the fathers of the Christian church went further and faid, I believe, because it is impossible. Lord Bacon hath the following most remarkable expressions, "The prerogative of God extends over the whole man, and reaches both to his will and his reason; so that man must absolutely " renounce himself and submit to God. And, " therefore, as we are obliged to obey the divine

law, though our will murmur against it; so are we obliged to believe the word of God, though " our reason be shocked at it. For, if we should believe only fuch things as are agreeable to our " reason; we affent to the matter, and not to the author, which is no more than we do to a fufe pected witnesse. But the Faith, imputed to " Abraham for righteousnesse, consisted in a particu-" lar laughed at by Sarab; who, in that respect, " was an image of the natural reason. And,

" therefore, the more abfurd and impossible any divine " mystery is, the greater bonor we do to God in be-

" lieving it, and so much the more noble the victory

" of Faith." [De augmentis Scientiarum, vol. I.

p. 261, 262.] Dr. Shaw's note on the place, is, On the foundation, here laid down, it cannot

" appear incredible that the author should write

" the characteristicks of a believing Christian in para-

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Lord Bacon.

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" doxes and seeming contradictions, which makes the PART II. " fixteenth supplement to this general work. For " he is here expresse, that Reason and Faith are " opposites. And, if this position be allowed, " revelation will then, perhaps, stand on its just foun-" dation." Again, your author, Pyrrbo, has quoted fome of the most weak and trifling things, p. 103, &c. from Bp. Beveridge's Private Thoughts and Refolutions;—a book wrote by him in his younger days, and before he had carefully studied the Scriptures, and which his Lordship, during his life-time, wifely suppressed. His Resolutions were, indeed, pious; but his Private Thoughts, as Dr. Whithy hath very justly observed, had much better have been kept private fill. And, as to all that Lord Bacon, or others. have faid, concerning the utter inconfiftency between reason and religion; believing things, because we cannot understand them, or because they are impossible, and the like; I would observe, that any of the greatest absurdities, even transubstantiation itself. might, at this rate, be proved true, and a most important article of the Christian Faith. For, as Archbp. Tillotson hath said, with the most agree- Archbp. able raillery and acutenesse, " As for the contra-" dictions contained in this doctrine, it is but tell-" ing the people (as they in effect do) that con-" tradictions ought to be no scruples in the way " of Faith; that the more impossible any thing " is, the fitter it is to be believed; that it is not " praise-worthy to believe plain possibilities; but " that this is the gallantry and heroical power of " Faith; this is the way to oblige God Almighty " for ever to us, to believe flat and downright contra-" distions?" Lord Bacon is acknowledged, confidering the times and all circumstances, to have been, in many respects, a prodigg of learning; and Bp. Beveridge was a pious (though not the most judicious) man, But their notions are nothing to

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PART II. us, any further than they are supported by Reason or Scripture. We call no man master upon earth: we allow no man to have dominion over our Faith Churches and councils, fathers and moderns, learned men and celebrated divines, have erred, and their determinations are not to be implicitely received. If human authority, or the fayings of great men, carried any argument in them, we could allege men of as great names, who have faid directly the contrary to what Lord Bacon and others have faid; - fuch as Locke and Newton, -names, subofe very mention must ever carry their own weight with them, without any superfluous encomiums in their behalf. Names, that always have, and always will be beard with the greatest reverence and regard, as long as true Piety and Christianity bave any remaining foot-Geps in the world. But we build nothing upon their authority, nor glory in their having faid fo and fo; but that they have proved what they have faid, and clearly made out the Reasonablenesse of the Christian Religion unto all that bave eyes to see, and ears to bear. -Your author, p. 72. has observed that, "when " Christianity first appeared, it was an inquiring " age;"-Suppose we allow it, as we readily do;-What then? What would he infer from that? The gospel spread in that inquiring age, when (as he afferts) reason was in the highest request and reputation; - and spread with most amazing swiftnesse. This, one would naturally think, was one great proof of its reasonablenesse and excellence; -confidering the means and methods that were taken to spread it, which were all fair and equitable ;- being an appeal to the reason, or underflandings of men. But some authors can argue any way. If it had been an age of ignorance and thick darknesse, like the ninth and following centuries, when Popery had darkened the light of the gospel,

and almost demolished all learning and common

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Christianity first appeared? in an inquiring age.

fense :- then they would never have ceased ha- PART II. ranguing upon the stupidity of the age, when Christianity first appeared; and how easy it must have been, at fuch a time, to impose upon mankind, and spread the most egregious absurdities. But, as it cannot be denied to have been an age of learning and free inquiry, above most that can be named; and, as they are forced to confesse, that Christianity neverthelesse then spread, even in fuch polite places as Greece and Rome, the very feats of the liberal arts and sciences, and where they most of all flourished; they would gladly try to turn this into an objection against a rational Faith; though they are almost at a losse to know which way to state the difficulty. However, we glory in it, that Christianity made its appearance, and gained ground in so inquiring an age, and ascribe its great successe, in such an age, to its being fo rational and excellent in its own nature, and attended with fuch bright and illustrious evidence.

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Pyrrbo faid, "That the behavior of some di-Obj. XIV. " vines, and of the civil magistrate in Christian " countries, plainly manifested that they did not " look upon Christianity as a thing to be examin-"ed, or that a rational Faith was the thing re-" quired. For, as to the divines, my author has " shown, p. 87, &c. that they do not design " men should examine freely, when all their ex-"hortations of that kind end thus: In God's name " judge freely all of you for yourselves; but then be " sure to judge all just as we do, or expect to stand " to the consequences, &c. Hence it is that they " are every day venting their loud complaints against the liberty of the presse, and so ready to appeal at every turn to the secular arm. Hence their loud and bideous outcries and popular charges, of affronting estab-" blishment,

PART II. " lishment, innovation, and flying in the face of the laws. 46 &c. Hence the cry of berefy, and the committing to the flames the pestilential writings of those that oppose them; and their persons too, whenever it has " been in their power. Hence it is that every canof didate for the ministry is required to declare his " unfeigned affent and consent to all the established " articles and forms, at his first fetting out, and that immediately and without hefitation.—Though " fome of them are very fubtile and mysterious, and he has not time, or perhaps capacity, as yet, to understand the nature, and discern the evidence of them.—Hence it is that young divines are frowned upon, and treated very ill by their superiors, if et they manifest an inquiring temper, presume to doubt, or show any want of due deference and humble submission. From all which it appears, that they look upon questioning in religion to be the se same thing with denying; and that all supending one's is judgment (though in order to be better informed) is, in this case, a professed and criminal opposition.—As to the magistrate, he establishes an act of uniformity " for the Faith and worship of all his subjects; he imposes tests, as the terms of society, and disquali-" fies fome of the most peaceable and loyal subjects " from ferving their king and their country; unse lesse they will believe, or professe to believe, and " worship, in the way that he prescribes. For it is supposed that every man is obliged of course to take his country's Faith and religion for his own. The magistrate, therefore, has frequently es executed the sentence of the priests; and the or priest looked upon the fword of the magistrate as his best weapon and furest defence. practices of princes and priefts, of our lawful fuer periors both in church and state, plainly show chat a rational Faith is not required; that we ought implicitely to submit to authority, and be directed

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" directed by our lawful fuperiors and guides; PART II. " that religion is not a proper subject for examina-" tion and debate, nor ought to be a matter of " our understanding and choice."-Theophilus said, The liberhe thought Pyrrbo had known him better than pro- ty of pripose such an objection to him, who was in judg-vate judgment against all fuch practices, whether in magifrates or divines. And so is the holy Scripture, which is our flandard, and which commands us to examine all things, in order to hold fast that which is good. All I contend for, fais he, is a fcriptural Christianity, and that to be made out by fair reasoning, and the liberty of private judgment. I utterly detest all tyranny and perfecution, all force and constraint in matters of religion, and would have every man to be fully perfuaded in his own mind, as every man must finally bear his own burthen, and every one give an account of bimself unto God, and therefore oughs to be left to his own master to stand, or fall. As to the magistrate; he may argue and instruct, like other men, but he ought not to interpose with his power, to bribe fome, and discourage others I look upon the imposing any prescribed opinions, as the terms of society, to be the most odious and flagrant instance of absurd partiality, cruelty and oppressions The magistrate ought, indeed, to use his power Religion to maintain the peace and liberty of all his subjects, not to be full they subvert the rights of society, or break the inforced peace. But, as to religion, he ought to leave every one to think for himself, because it is matter of pure ins derstanding and choice.—As to divines I should think it greatly to their honor, if they would no longer infilt upon candidates subscribing, instantly and without hesitation, to articles, which they have fearce read, or not duely confidered; if they would carefully and coolly answer such as opposed them, without ever calling in the fecular arm, and thereby tempting others to think that they there's felves

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PART II. selves suspect their own arguments, and distrust their own cause. Those, who are exalted to high places, and have the disposal of church-preferments, should not frown upon young divines, when they discover an inquiring temper, but incourage them to study the Scriptures,—to search into the nature and evidence of what they are to believe and teach; and affure them of protection and good. will, as long as they continue virtuous and fincere. Even the writings of Infidels ought not to be committed to the flames, nor they themselves hurt in their persons, their liberty, or their property. The best way to silence them is folidly to answer their arguments, and folve their difficulties and objections; and (if they are ever to be brought over) they must be treated with humanity. For the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach; in meeknesse instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will grant them repentance to the acknowlegement of the truth, &c. This is our way to victory and triumph; and a rational Faith can never be propagated or defended in any other way. - Pyrrbo faid, Theophilus, you have answered this objection by allowing it to be true. But I am persuaded that it still remains an objection against some Christians; whether Christianity itself do, or do not, condemn it; -and notwithstanding you, rational believers, may in this respect give up the cause. However, I am pleased to find that we agree in a point of fuch moment, and would propose that we part this one evening, while we are agreed. For I have one objection more, about which, I believe, we shall not think fo much alike; and it is of fuch moment, that it will require a whole evening's conversation to discusse it fully, and as it ought to be discussed. The proposal was agreed to, and they determined to come together the next evening to make an end of Pyrrbo's objections. DIALOGUE

## DIALOGUE, IV.

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OR ITO begun the conversation at this time, and PART II. faid, Pyrrbo, I understand that you have one objection more to propose, which it will take up the whole evening to answer;—be pleased, Sir, to propose it, that it may be thoroughly considered, and so we may conclude the second part of our designed work. Pyrrho was prepared and faid, he had referved this objection for the finishing stroke; because he apprehended that his author had laid the greatest stresse upon it. The objection is this,—" Suppose Obj. XV. " fuch learned or ingenious men, as the author of " the calculation of Daniel's weeks, or of the trial of " the witnesses of Christ's refurrection, Mr. Locke, Mr. " Addison, or the like, by their uncommon learning " and talents, or great application, have discovered " the Reasonablenesse of the Christian Religion; " yet what is that to the common people? The " bulk of mankind are forced to labor for their " bread, and are incapable of reasoning and judg-" ing. They have, therefore, absolutely no con-" cern in the affair; tho' religion be in itself ever " fo wife and reasonable." Theophilus observed that Pyrrbo had very concifely and justly stated the objection, as the author had expressed it, in several places. But (continued he) the objection, in other parts of his book, is stated very differently. For he has told us, p. 52, &c. that, if miracles were necessary in the infancy of the gospel, they are so still, and will be to the end of the world. For which he has not only brought that noble evidence, that the church of Rome is of that opinion; but hath also added what he thinks much more threwd and formidable, viz. whenever miracles ceafe, the authority of the evidence, which depended on them, ceases with them.—A miracle, that was ocular proof to its co-temporaries, is to us no more than uncertain hear-say. And a great deal more to the same purpose, to T 2 **show** 

PART II. show that we are not to believe any thing, because another fais be faw it .; and that the light of conviction can extend no farther than to the eye-witnesse bimself, being lost and extinguished the first moment it is offered to be imparted. As, therefore, the thing cannot poffibly be proved at all, or to any man's reasonable fatisfaction, what signifies all his talk of Locke, Addition, or any person's seeing the evidence to their own fatisfaction? Well might he represent it as an impossibility to make the common people rational believers, when he is of opinion that none, even the most learned and studious men, can have any more than uncertain bear-fay, on which to ground their Faith. Let no man, after this, wonder to hear the Scriptures called manuscript authorities, paper revelations, the suspicious repositories of buman testimony, in which nothing remains that can deferve the least notice, or be thought of consequence enough to ingage a moment's attention. See p. 59. But, notwiththanding his frequent infinuations that there is now no rational proof of Christianity remaining in the world, or his throwing out, at other times, some falvo's, as if some learned men might be rational believers, but no body else; and boldly intimating that the Scripture cannot deserve the least notice, or be thought of consequence to ingage a moment's attention; fuch rational believers, as are fincerely concerned for truth, piety and virtue, will not take his bare word in such a case. And, if they should do it, they must answer for it at an higher tribunal.-A man, who is to live by land, is not obliged to study navigation, or a ploughman to be a proficient in mathematics. There are two things which every man is obliged to inquire into, viz. religion, and his own proper businesse in life. But every man is not obliged to understand music, or any of the liberal arts and sciences. However, as eterning isof much more importance than time, every thinking

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inking ing man will be of a different opinion from your PART II. author, and reckon that religion deferves fome regard from mankind in general, and is of fufficient consequence to ingage at least a few moments of their attention. Your author fais that, if miracles were necessary to the first publication of the gospel, they are so still; this doth not appear from any thing he hath faid. For miracles might be necessary to gain the attention of mankind, to a doctrine that was new, and contrary to the prejudices and prepoffessions of the world in general; and yet not be necessary to continue that religion in the world. The commonnesse of miracles would abate mens attention to them, and make them as little regarded as the works of creation, which might be called flanding miracles. Besides, an authentic, credible, and well-attefted history of the doctrine, and the miraculous evidences, is capable of conveying the notice of it down to future ages, not only in the same manner that the knowlege of other facts is conveyed from age to age; but in a much more effectual manner; if it be remembered that a visible church, with a stated method of instruction and manner of worship, was collected and formed, by the Apostles of Jesus, in which these Scriptures were to be read publicly, and the body of Christ edified, by the knowlege conveyed to them from thence. (a) If Jesus Christ and his (a) See Bp. Apostles had only taught, and by miracles proved, Butler's the gospel to their co-temporaries, there would Analogy, have been great occasion for miracles in every age; otherwise Christianity must soon have vanished. To prevent this, appears to have been one reason why a vilible church was instituted,—to hold up the light of revelation, and propagate Christianity throughout all ages, to the end of the world. Christi-This argument hath one great advantage above anity may many, viz. that fact and experience confirm the becontinutruth of it. Where Christians forfake the affemb-miracles. lings of themselves together, or neglect to read

(a) See Ro.

PART II. the Scriptures, and inculcate the great doctrines therein contained, in fuch places Christianity withers and dies away: But where liberty is granted by the civil magistrate, and men are allowed not only to examine in private, but publicly to affemble, and read the Scriptures, and professe their Faith, and worship in their own way, there is no occasion for miracles, but Christianity spreads, without such renewed external attestations. And, to the continuance of it in the world, it is always supposed that men use proper care to preserve and, continue it, And it is owing to nothing but the faults of mankind, that it has not spread more, in every age, fince its first publication .- Pyrrho faid, my author alleges that, "the common people are incapable of reasoning, thinking, or judging at all; and " therefore they must be excused." True (replied Theophilus) he does talk in that strain: And, if he 'was regarded, his discourse would, no doubt, prove a great bleffing to the multitude. For it would teach them (if they could but think and reason a little, as acutely as your author has done) " that "they have no manner of businesse with religion; st that it is not of consequence enough to ingage 's a few moments of their attention; that it is a thing intirely above their capacities; and therefore they can have no concern with it." When the infidels, those industrious ministers of darknesse, have gathered churches, fet up pulpits, and established lectures, [as your author talks, p. 97.] I should think this might be one of the most proper subjects for the fermons and discourses [not of their priests;for they must have none; but] of their preachers and most learned men; a principal topic, which may deserve not a few moments of the people's attention; if they could but reason at all, or were capable of going beyond a fingle proposition.—But has he not likewise infinuated, Pyrrbo, that the bass or Elements to college to thing

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thing is not to be proved? Why then should he PART'II. play double, and pretend that Locke, or Newton. or other ingenious and learned men, have difcovered the Reasonablenesse of the Christian Religion. and have believed upon evidence? Pyrrbo observed that he might do that for a cover, and for fear of. laying himself too open. However, (continued he) what do you fay, Theophilus, to the difficulty itself? Theophilus answered, that the evidence was in itself the same, to whomsoever it was proposed: Tho' he allowed, all had not equal capacity of judging. But (fais he) Almighty God, in giving the evidence, hath wifely confidered the state of mankind, both in different ages of the world, and in different stations of life. Some evidences were granted to the primitive Christians, and others to us; tho some are common to all. The first Christians had the prejudices of education to conquer, and therefore they faw miracles worked, or lived near the times, or places, where they were worked in great numbers. The history was fresh in every body's mouth; and no person was so hardy, as to pretend to contradict the history, or deny the facts. are educated in the knowlege of the Christian religion, and are free from those inveterate prejudices, which both Jews and Gentiles then labored under; and which we do not know but we might have adhered to, as obstinately as they did. have, indeed, no more than an history of this doctrine and those miraculous evidences; but then it is a credible and well-attested history. there are matters of fact fo well attested, at so great a distance of time and place, as that no reasonable person can in the least call them in question, the books of the New Testament, and the grand facts there recorded, have, of all other antient or distant facts, the greatest and most remarkable attestation. We have (what the primitive Christians could not

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PART II. have) the concurrent testimony of many ages and nations; the advantage of confidering and comparing the objections of adversaries on all sides: and feeing that, in how many ways foever it is attacked, Christianity is still capable of a rational and just defence. And finally, tho' we do not fee miracles worked before our eyes, as the first Chris stians did; yet we have some evidences which they had not; viz. we have lived to fee fome very remarkable prophesies fulfilled, such as that of the long and wide dispersion of the Jewish nation, and of the grand apollaly and most notorious corruption of the Christian religion, in the church of These are striking evidences to us, tho they could be none to the primitive Christians. Every body cannot write fuch a book as the ingenious trial of the witnesses of Christ's resurrection, the judicious analogy, &c. (for which I take this opportunity to thank the learned authors, because of the light and entertainment they have given me.) Such a production as Mr. Locke's Reasonablenelle of the Christian Religion is not the production of every age, much leffe of every person, But what then? God has fo wifely ordered things, that fome should be men of genius and leifure, and should be able to throw light upon this or that subject, and range the arguments in proper order, to fet truth before mens eyes in the most agreeable and advantagious light. And it is sufficient if others attend to evidence, when it is offered to their view, and ready prepared to their hands. But these ingenious authors, now mentioned, have not made any new evidence. Even before they favored the world with their productions, the evidences were in themselves the same, and several persons saw enough of them to be convinced of their weight and folidity. -Nor do we contend that every argument is necessary to be known, or understood, by common Christians,

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Christians, or all by any one man; but the more PART II. any one understands, so much the better. The The arguplainest man, of common sense, will at first view ments, discern the Christian morals to be good, and the which the motives and fanctions, wife and reasonable. He common will find, when he reads the Scriptures, or hears may unthem read, that they claim regard as a divine re-derstand. velation. He will find, upon examination, that the history is true, and has, by mankind in general, been allowed to be genuine: And he will readily argue (as they did in our Savior's time) no man could have done such miracles, as Christ and his Apostles did, unlesse God bad been with them, and in an extraordinary manner affifted them. - So far a ploughman may go, and argue justly, and with great eafe, as well as clearnesse. Your author, p. 17. &c. afferts that the generality of apprehensions extend not beyond a simple proposition;—that the souls of the multitude are lodged in their bands; and therefore it would be an injurious representation of God to fay, that he should require of them to judge aright, when he has not given them abilities to judge at all: -Pyrrbo observed, from what his author had said, p. 42. that " Mr. Woolaston had wrote a most accurate " and learned book, called, The Religion of Nature " delineated. And that Dr. Clarke, in the second "volume of his Boyle's Lectures, had made use of " fuch principles, and introduced his proof of the " truth of reveled religion, with a long and labored " account of the religion of nature, of the truth " and fitnesse of things, of eternal relations, moral " differences of actions, moral obligations, and the " like; that that was looked upon, as one of the " best defences of Christianity; but that it was a " book which the common people could not un-"derstand, neither could they be supposed to see " the proofs and evidences, as he had made them " out; much leffe could they ever have thought

PART II. " of fuch things themselves. Now this (continued " Pyrrbo) greatly strengthens my author's objection. " who hath infifted upon it, p. 18. &c. that it is " not enough that the thing be true in itself, unleffe it could be made appear to the rude and fort-fighted understandings of many, that cannot enter sufficiently into the argument, to become apprized of its merits. " And again he fais, it is by no means sufficient that ce your argument be indeed conclusive in itself, unlesse of you can adapt it effectually to my understanding too. es and make it conclusive to me. For supposing the bistorical facts of the gospel are most highly credible and convincing to fuch as have the capacity to look into them; yet unto such as bave not, they are properly " neither true nor false; they are not chargeable with " any verdict about them, one way or the other. So that, if Christianity could be proved to be true, es yet all men are not bound to believe it; and my " author has, in particular, exempted the multitude " from all obligation even fo much as to attempt " to understand, or judge of it, or spend one " moment of their time, and attention about it." To all this, Theophilus replied, that the Apostles were most of them unlearned men; and your author could observe this, when he thought it to his purpose; that to the poor the gospel was preached, by Jefus Cbrist and his Apostles; trom whence one would prefume that the arguments laid level to the capacities of the multitude. That they did not begin (as Dr. Clarke has done, in the second volume of his Boyle's Lectures) with stating the principles of natural religion, eternal relations, and moral differences of things; but worked miracles, to establish their million and authority, and then all they faid was justly regarded as a doctrine from heaven. Of this manner of arguing the people were judges. For, whatever difficulties may be raifed in speculation concerning miracles; yet in fact, whenever a perfon

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fon appears, teaching good morals, and working PART II. many and beneficent miracles, there will be no great difficulty in determining that he is a teacher fent from God.—But you mistake the very defign of the second volume of Dr. Clarke's Boyle's Lectures. and all fuch labored defences, which were not writ for the use of the common people; but to answer the difficulties and objections, started by unbelievers; or to lead speculative men into arguments of a more abstract kind. That was the design of the honorable Mr. Boyle, in the instituting of his lectures, which was a most noble and excellent defign. And it is the glory of truth, that, in whatever way you examine it, you will be the more strengthened and established in the belief of it. Some arguments lie level to the capacities of the common people, [fuch as have been mentioned, viz. the goodnesse of the morals; the reasonableneffe of the motives, or fanctions; and that the books of the New Testament are, by mankind in general, acknowleged to have been written by the persons they are commmonly ascribed to;—for, if the history be true, the religion must be true, as being the most excellent in itself, and so remarkably attested.] And, besides these obvious arguments, learned and ingenious men can fet before the eyes of the people, feveral additional arguments and evidences, which further illustrate or confirm the truth of revelation. I suppose, Pyrrba, you think that many persons, who have no learning, may understand the design of your author's acute performance, and can perceive the force of his objections against a rational Faith: Now, why may not fuch of them as take in the objections, understand the answers also? They must needs be of a very peculiar infidel-make, indeed, who are capable of reading and judging on that fide of the question only. But those, who have read neither fide.

PART II. fide, who have not fo much as heard of the names of Locke or Clarke, Newton or Addison, on the one fide, or of Collins, Tindal, and other heroes in the noble cause of infidelity, on the other fide; yet they hear the Scriptures read; those Scriptures where arguments are intermixed with the most reasonable doctrines, and the most excellent moral precepts: And they can from thence acquire a rational Faith; tho' further examination can bring them acquainted with more difficult arguments. and strengthen and establish them in what they have already believed .- Your author, Pyrrho, has a very odd turn of mind. For he intimates, that fuch additional discoveries rather tend to make him an infidel. Having mentioned the calculation of Daniel's Weeks, and the Analogy of Reason and Revelation, he fais, p. 21. I cannot but draw to myself very different consequences from those they seem to expect from their proposal of them. Instead of availing to convince my reason of the truth of any particular religious institution, they have a just contrary effect, &c. and he concludes that a religion, thus defended, can never be defigned for the bulk of mankind, or be that necessary truth, which stands in need of any fuch far fetched apologies, and labored accounts, to reconcile and explain it .- Whereas he ought to have considered, that these labored defences were written against those labored and far-fetched difficulties and perplexities, which certain authors have thrown in the way of plain, honest Christians, who would never have thought of the difficulties on the one hand, nor of the answers, on the other; if speculative men had not proposed them. Christianity itself was well proved and well established in the minds of many, before these new objections, or apologies, were once thought of. Its grand evidences were co-temporary with the original institution itself, and intirely complete for the purpose,

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in that very age in which it was first published. PART II. and so they have remained ever fince. The arguments for the truth of Christianity are various, and futed to men in various fituations, and of very different capacities. If you read the Scriptures, and know nothing of the fubtile objections of the infidels, or the answers of learned men, you have evidence sufficient to make you a rational believer. If you go into the examination of the difficulties and objections, on one fide; and as carefully confider the apologies and answers, on the other; then your evidences will be more and stronger, in proportion to the advances you make in the knowlege of the subject. I cannot perceive, why any body should object against setting the subject in various lights, or producing all forts of arguments? Surely the evidences do not thereby lose any thing of their value, but ought to be more regarded, and have a more fpreading influence. There is a great deal of wisdom appears, at first fight, in the works of creation and providence. The most plain and The swork illiterate man cannot but behold how regularly of creation, feed-time and harvest, summer and winter, day they are and night, fuccede one another. But furely, a studied, more curious observer can find out numberlesse appear the more proofs and instances of the astonishing wif- more exdom and power of the creator and governor of the world: And the most diligent and profound search strengthens that argument; which is a proof of its being a good one. A great many can understand Derham or Ray, who could never have made such discoveries themselves. And yet these, and other fuch authors, confirm their readers in their belief of the wisdom and power of the maker and great disposer of all. And would it not be a most perverse way of arguing, upon reading such books as these, or Dr. Clarke on the Being and Attributes of God, instead of being confirmed, to be unhinged

PART II. unhinged by their labored accounts, or to fuggest (as your author has done, p. 81.) that they have rather contributed to make for the other fide of the queflion, &c? At this rate, writing in defence of Christianity must be the way to overturn it, and the writings of the infidels must preferve and establish iti-Let us take another instance from Christianity itself. When a man of plain, common sense. hears the command of Jefus, concerning one man's having no more than one wife; and finds it inforced by that argument, that from the begining it was so appointed of God, who originally created one man and one woman :- He can confider Jesus as a prophet, who worked miracles to establish his divine mission and authority, and therefore his injunctions deferve regard. He can fee fome inconveniencies arifing from polygamy and frequent divorces; which will strengthen and confirm his regard to that precept. But, when he hears of those ingenious observations of curious and learned men, viz. that upon the most careful and exact calculation, there are only twelve females born to thirteen males; and that as men are imployed in war, navigation, and other things, they are exposed to be cut off in greater numbers; which makes the proportion between the two fexes more exact ;- furely fuch-discoveries, such labored accounts and profound calculations, will not make him pay leffe regard to that precept of Christ's, and produce a quite different consequence from what such learned men seemed to expect from their proposal; but must of course lead him to conclude, that that was the original inflitution; that it is a ftrong argument of a constant and watchful providence, that the proportion between the two fexes is fo exactly preferved and continued :- that Jesus Christ saw deeper into human nature, and the state of mankind, than could have been imagined by a carelesse, inattentive

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Natural observations confirm Chriflianity.

tive person .... And, in one word, that the more PARTIL. the works of creation and providence are fearched into, and understood, the more they confirm the truth of the Christian revelation, and add fuch supports and evidences, as could hardly have been expected, or believed.—From these and the like observations, I should think it evident that Christianity is not in a worse condition since Dr. Clarke published his Boyle's Lectures, or Bp. Butler has favored the world with his Analogy, &c. For, however things may appear to the mind of your author, I can affure him that there are perfons, who have no learning, and who are acquainted with no language but their own, that read Dr. Clarke's defence of natural and reveled religion, and some other excellent apologies; and are thereby firengthened and confirmed in their regard both to natural and reveled religion. And, if I take you and your friends right. Pyrrbo, you are grieved that there are such books in the world, as these now mentioned; and that men of fuch great names, as Locke and Newton, and the like, have wrote in defence of the Christian religion. For, if you could once deprive us of fuch learned apologists; if the Deists might write on, and there were no body to oppose them; if they could persuade the Christians to give up the rational divines and believers;—the rest would be an easy prey to them, and the glorious cause of infidelity might then flourish and triumph, and go on without controul, conquering and to conquer. But we remember the fable of the wolves, who would have perfuaded the sheep to give up their dogs, that the wolves might protect and defend the fold; when their evident defign was to devour and deffroy the flock; at their leifure, and that without any difficulty, or refistance. In the Scripture it is supposed that; while the people are imployed in laboring with their hands, to provide for themselves and for their families. -1/21/0

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PART II. families, men of leisure and study are to prepare instructions ready to their hands; and by reading the Scriptures every Lord's Day in public, explaining those facred writings, and applying them to the various cases of mankind, the knowlege of Christianity becomes more extensive, is more talked of, and inquired into, than if it was left merely to the private reading and observation of the people. It is also much easier to understand what is distinctly read and clearly explained, than to attain the fame knowlege, without these helps. If any public teachers of Christianity have not read the Scriptures, and taken pains to understand them and interpret them faithfully; if they have imployed their time chiefly in other studies, or without studying at all. If they have preached up politics, the glorious doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance, or the divine right of tithes; if they have given the people mere lectures of morality, without any regard to their text, or showing how the best morals may be inforced by Christian motives; if they have contented themselves with a sermon of a quarter of an hour, confifting of a few sentences out of Seneca, rather than from the facred writings; if they have laid out their zeal in inculcating mystical and allegorical divinity, or a few metaphyfical, confused and unintelligible notions, taken from the schoolmen, and called that right orthodox divinity; -when it has borne no resemblance to the pure, simple doctrine of Christ and his Apostles; no wonder the people, under fuch pastors, have not been able to judge of Christianity. But all thinking men must fee that fuch things are great faults in the teachers of this excellent religion: And they, who have been guilty, will have much to answer for. However, as the Scriptures are so common among us, and all the people are allowed freely to read them when they please, they may and ought, besides public

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public instruction, to read the Scriptures themselves PART II. in their families, and in private; and then fee whether their public inftructions are agreeable thereto, or no. - Your author, Pyrrho, doth often infinuate that the common people cannot in the least argue; that their fouls are lodged in their bands; that their apprehensions extend not beyond a simple proposition; and that they are thrown out at the very mention of a medium. If he means that they do not argue, and that there is a too general and shameful neglect of religion, and inattention to it; it is too true, and ought to be lamented. But he afferts too much in faying, they cannot in the least argue. For, let him talk with them about their own affairs; or peculiar businesse, and he will find they can argue better than he, and twenty academics joined together; that an university education, and skill in Syllogisms, do not qualify a man to direct them how to carry on their affairs in a more dexterous or fuccessful manner than they commonly do already ;-that they could fooner, in fuch things, impose upon him, than he with all his learning, could impose upon them; and that if, in any other matter, he had cheated them once, they could argue beyond a simple proposition, and would not readily suffer him to cheat them a fecond time. The common people have more understanding than some men will allow them to have. They may, indeed, be thrown out at the mention of a medium, as not understanding the meaning of the word; they cannot expresse themselves in Syllogisms, and argue in mood and figure; they cannot range their thoughts in that exact order, or clothe them with such proper language, as an academic, perhaps may, by being trained up in the schools. But they can fee the force of an argument, and in many cases reason very well. Whatever he may talk of religion's being of no importance to the sillum forcad far and wik, and conclude long,

Religion of importance to the common people.

PART II. multitude, it is certainly of the greatest. And, besides the truths, which concern their own proper bufineffe and way of life, the truths of morality and religion are almost the only truths, which the multitude are concerned to know and attend to. And it is apparent that they are able to judge of those parts of religion which are of the greatest importance, and which are the plain and practical parts. Let me propose a case in point, and see whether the people cannot argue, or whether you can impose upon . them, as to plain facts, and their direct and proper consequences. Let the whole tribe of Deifts write a book in English, half as large as the New Testament, and affert that there was a prophet in this nation, within these fifty or fixty years, who worked miracles in London, and all over the country; that he fent Apostles, not only into Scotland and Wales; but also into France, Holland, Germany, and all the kingdoms of Europe; that they also, in his name, worked miracles; that some of them are yet living; and that they have made a number of disciples, wherever they have been :- could they perfuade any body to believe them? would not the common people laugh at fuch a ftory, inflead of becoming their converts? and fay, " how so comes it to paffe that we never heard of these " remarkable things before? Or where are your 44 facts and vouchers? What evidence do you now " bring?" Such a forgery could never take place. And yet, just such a forgery must have taken place, when the books of the New Testament first appeared, if there had not been facts to appeal to, and bear testimony to the things there recorded.—Christianity is built upon plain facts. And, though the people may be led into enthufiaftic notions, yet facts are stubborn things, and must be real, or else the belief of them, in a country where they may be freely examined, can never spread far and wide, and continue long. The

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The people can and do argue justly in such cases; Part II. for their capacities are not inferior to those of other men, though education has made a difference; which is, indeed, very confiderable. Again, the common people can argue as to the direct and proper consequences of facts. For, after Dr. Emms's refurrection failed, how did the French prophets come to nothing? Though several of them were, before that, deluded with their enthusiastic notions; yet the people argued justly, when they came to falls; and concluded that, if their miracles were not real, their prophetic mission was a groundlesse and absurd pretence. And, (I say it again) as to facts, where the people have liberty freely to examine, they can judge, and do generally argue as justly as other men; and Christianity is built upon falls.—What should hinder them from arguing thus, " If Christianity is true, then there Infidelity " is a righteous judgment to come, when the promotes " wicked shall be punished, and good men re-vice. " warded? But, if the Christian religion were " false, they would, in general, think themselves " more at liberty to do feveral things, which are "there strictly forbidden; and would conclude " that they are not obliged to lead fuch pious, holy " lives, as Christianity requires." Nay, it is obferved that many of the loofe and vicious part of mankind actually become more wicked; when, upon reading of certain authors, or conversing with gay company, they are perfuaded to turn infidels. For they, many of them, make shipwrack of a good conscience, together with the Christian Faith.—Would you fet the common people at liberty from the laws of Christ?—Suppose they should take it into their heads, that they cannot go beyond a fingle proposition, and would be presently thrown out at the very mention of a medium that the laws of the land are intricate, perplexed things, VAITOUS

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PART II things, about many of which even the gentlemen. that are most learned in the law, are not agreed among themselves; and that, as they cannot argue about them, they cannot possibly be under any obligation to understand or obey them and should thereupon conclude themselves at liberty to break the laws at their pleasure; -would any body take this for a just excuse? Or think them therefore loofe from all regard to the laws of the land?—One would think that no lovers of good morals would take fuch indefatigable pains, as fome do, to fet the common people loofe from all religion, The very hearing fuch excellent morals read to them every week, as are contained in the Scriptures, must be of great use. Mankind are bad enough, as it is, but, if they could once be persuaded to throw off all religion, and the restraints they are now under, how wicked and abandoned, how wild, favage and barbarous, would they in a little time become?—Thus, Pyrrbo, as your author has laid the greatest stresse on this objection, you fee I have been more large and particular in my answer to it.-And now, as a conclusion to this second part, I would briefly fum up what has been faid, viz. that Faith is a virtuous disposition of mind; that Christianity is reasonable and excellent in itself; and has most ample attestations from literal propheties punctually accomplished, from numberlesse plain and beneficent miracles, and more especially from Christ's refurrection from the dead, and the plenteous effusion of the Spirit which followed foon after; from the the fwift progresse which Christianity made, in consequence of these things, we have confirmation in abundance of the evidences then afforded. The books of the New Testament, which record these things, have all possible marks of being ge-

nuine, and containing a true history. Even the

forest far ar

The conclusion of the fecond Part.

various readings have been shown not to weaken, PART II. but to corroborate the evidence. The other ob jections, urged by your author, have received a fair folution, and feveral of the things objected have been shown to be arguments in favor of Chriflianity, rather than objections against it. Can it be faid, after all this, that Christianity is not founded on Argument? Or will any man feriously affirm that all these things put together are not sufficient to deferve one moment's attention, or the least notice and regard? If the things of religion deserve no regard, what can deferve regard? Are any of the little concerns of this dying world worthy our care and attention, and the momentous things of eternity of no importance?—When death is every moment advancing with speedy wings, is it not worth one moment's attention to inquire, whether there be not a future state of recompence; and when ther the great and glorious things, which Christianity promifes to good men, be not realities? Surely, if the people can have any concern in any thing or if any thing can deferve their regard, Christianity, when fairly proposed to them with its many and striking evidences, must deserve their attention and regard. Some of the evidences lie within their view. They are not required to believe upon fuch evidences as they cannot understand. But it is greatly to the glory of the Christian religion, that the more they examine it, the more they will of course become rational believers; the more honests and upright they are, they will the more steddily professe it, and more constantly conform to its excellent precepts and the more they conform to its precepts, they will become more acceptable to the Deity, more useful and beneficent to others, and more perfect and happy in themselves: bus snow

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Thus ended the fecond Part of their design. What remained was the interpretation of those

The Reasonablenesse of the Christian Religion, 158 PART IL texts which the author had misapplied. But that they referred to the third and last Part.

## PART III. DIALOGUE I.

or exception to be argun entries

PART III. WHEN they came to enter upon this last Part of their defign, Crito addressed himself to them both, and faid. Gentlemen, I would put you in mind that Theophilus has given the interpretation of feveral texts already. Such texts need not be repeted. There are other texts which the author hath not brought by way of proof, but alluded to them; fuch texts need not be mentioned, or however need not to be inlarged upon. But the texts, on which he hath rested his cause, or chiefly depended, ought to be critically examined, and carefully explained, according to the intent of the facred writers, and the connection of the places from whence they are quoted. It is your busineffe, Theophilus, to show how they are perverted; and yours, Pyrrbo, to see that justice be done your author.—Theophilus renewed the request, which he had made at the begining, viz. that Crito would undertake this part of the work. To which Crite answered, he would continue in the chair, which was the place affigned him; but, if any criticism of his could be of fervice, he would be ready to lend his best affistance. Theophilus, with some hesitation, ingaged in this fervice; and, after wishing again that Crite would have excused him, he said; -The interpretations, you must expect from me, are fuch as occur to a man of plain fense, upon a careful examination of the words, and of the feope and connection. I can make a shift to consult my Greek Testament, and to peruse some translations and expolitors, and then diffinguish what feems to me most agreeable to the design of the place. If there be any occasion to fettle the mean-

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ing of any difficult word, or phrase, in the ori-PARTIII. ginal; I must apply to Crito; and I know Pyrrbo has that opinion both of his skill and integrity, as to pay great deference to his decisions .- Then Pyrrbo The 32d asked, " whether Jesus had not plainly condemned text ex-" that free inquiry, which rational believers plead plained, " for, by expressy assuring us, that he looks upon a Mat. xii. " feeker as an anticbrift professed, in faying, be that is Luke xi. " not with me, is against me?" Theophilus replied, 23. See that seemed to him to be a fort of proverbial speech p. 6. among the Jews, which in English we should expresse thus, neuters are commonly looked upon, as enemies. Fefus hath twice made use of this proverb; and fuch as have harmonized the four gospels, have shown that, though there are in them many like phrases and expressions, yet these two discourses were delivered some time after one another. both places, the words were used upon occasion of the Pharifees infinuating to the people that Jesus was affifted to work miracles by some evil spirit, and particularly, that he cast out demons by a confederacy with Beelzebub, the prince of demons. To clear himself of such an accusation, Jesus took notice, that an house or kingdom, divided against itself, must come to ruine; and that if Satan destroyed his own kingdom, that kingdom could not stand. Whereas, he infinuated that his kingdom was of a nature directly opposite to that of Satan's! And that, though Satan, like a strong man armed, kept his house; yet he, like a stronger man, plainly showed that he could bind him, and strip his house at his pleasure: And that he was actually, by his doctrine and miracles, turning Satan out of his house, or overthrowing his kingdom. And then, in the words now under confideration) he addressed himself to the Pharisees, his wicked and implacable enemies, to this effect, "You know the proverb, He that is not with me, is against me, or " neuters

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"how much more, then, ought I to effeem you mine enemies, who are not inerely neuters, but most wicked opposers of me, and my kingdom of righteousnesse,—blaspheming the Spirit of God, by which I perform my miracles, and maliciously ascribing them to the prince of demons, contrary to all truth and evidence?—Wherefore I say unto you, though all other sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven; yet blaspheming the Spirit, in this mandone, shall never be forgiven." The proverb is applied in the same manner, in St. Luke's gospel. Now, how doth this text, as it thus stands in connection with our Lord's discourse, in the least interfere with mens examining all things, in order to their holding saff that which is good?

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The 33d text explained, Gal. i. 8. See p. 11.

Pyrrbo inquired, " whether it was not condemn-" ing all reasoning in matters of religion, for the "Apostle to say, though even an angel from beaven " was to preach a new dostrine to us, we are not to ec give the least beed or credit to his pretensions? For, what is there in the utmost of reason's assurances to se falfify or confront such a preacher? What is there that the nature of any external evidence can possibly et afford us, that bath not more than a ballance in " fuch an authority?" Theophilus faid that the author had not quoted the text fairly. The case was this; St. Paul had, from among the idolatrous Gentiles, collected feveral churches in the country of After his departure, there got in among them a false Apostle, a judaizing Christian, who would have them circumcifed, and become subject to the law of Moses, as well as the gospel of Christ, otherwise he pretended they could not be faved. Now St. Paul, by the miracles he had worked among them, and by the spiritual gifts and miraculous powers he had imparted unto them, had plainly proved that he was an Apostle, not of men, neither

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neither by man, but constituted such by Jesus Christ PARTIIIand God the Father, who had raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Having, therefore, given such clear proofs of his Apostolic mission, he wrote to them to persevere stedfast in their adherence to what he had taught and fufficiently proved. And, having expressed some surprize, that they were so soon moved from him, who had called them to be Christians, and taught them the truth, to another gospel, of a quite different nature; - he acquaints them, that he was not ignorant of the cause of it, and that it was owing to nothing else, but that there had got in among them some who troubled them, and perverted the gospel of Christ. But (fays the Apostle) If we, or an angel from beaven, should preach unto you a different thing from what we have preached unto you, let bim be accursed. As I have said before, so say I now again, If any man preach a different doctrine to you from what you have received, let bim be accursed. The plain and evident reason of this is added; - For I acquaint you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me, was not according to men; for I received it not of man; neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.-Now, might not the Apostle, with the highest reason and propriety, say, " If any man " contradicted an important, clearly proved, and " well attested truth, let him be accursed!" None but a vicious man would contradict fuch truths. Such a one may perhaps pretend to be a very pious and holy man, or to have extraordinary illumination; but, if it were an angel from heaven, that contradicted any momentous and well attested truth, let bim be accursed, sais St. Paul. For, let him pretend to what he will, he certainly must be a very wicked person; and, in that particular, act a very wicked part. - And I ask you, Pyrrbo, whether you can with any reason suppose, that working a train of miracles, and imparting to great numbers

PARTIII. of other men fome spiritual gifts, or miraculous powers, would not be such external evidence, as much to over-ballance the appearance of an angel, and all that authority which fuch an appearance could give to any contrary doctrine or meffage? - As to your author; he can make evidence firong, or weak, good for fomething, or good for nothing, just as may best sure his purpose; - as I design hereafter to show, with respect to the very case in hand, viz. the authority of fuch a preacher, or the evidence which would arise from the appearance of an angel.

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The 34th plained.

Pyrrho went on with the texts quoted by his autext, Heb. thor, and faid, "Without some particular acknowlegxi. 6. ex- cc ments first made, there is not in all our indeavors the least room to hope for acceptance at his hands. See p. 16.

" For which he alleges this text, He that cometh to "God, must believe that be is; and then adds the " following interpretation, viz. That be bath graciously reveled his boly will to mankind, and granted them pardon of fin by the mediation of his Son; and " must att only in consequence of such persuasion. And " this my author has confirmed by faying, We must be provided of our creed, before we are warranted to or pray so much as for Faith itself; to prove which he " brings another text, viz. We must not lift up our bands to beaven with doubting." Theophilus answered that, as to the former of these two texts, the author has faid, p. 79. He that cometh to Christ, must believe that be is; but that there are no such words in the Bible. Nor have the words, [He that cometh to God must believe that be is, &c. ] any reference to the revelation of his will to mankind, and granting them pardon, by the mediation of his Son Jesus Christ; - but they contain one or two of the grand principles of natural religion, viz. the existence of God, and his goodnesse, or readinesse to reward those that seek him; which men must believe, before they can be

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expected to come unto God and worship him, or PARTIII. receive any revelation at his hand. Now these principals of natural religion men are led to believe, by arguing from the works of creation and providence. The believing that God exists, and that he is a good Being, must needs appear, to every attentive reader, a very different thing from Faith in Christ Jesus, or in the Christian revelation.—Pyrrbo faid that some Christians, and even celebrated divines, had quoted texts in as loofe a manner, and why might not his author have the fame privilege? Theophilus answered, that such a way of quoting texts could prove nothing on either fide; and that he was as willing to give up fuch quotations for Christianity, as to condemn them when levelled against it. He further faid, that picking out straggling phrases, and loose independent sentences, without any regard to the defign and connection, could never be the way to come at the true sense, but the contrary. And if so, The 35th then the other text you have quoted, Pyrrbo, is as text, little to the purpose for which your author hath al- 1 Tim. ii. leged it. We must lift up our bands to beaven with-8. explainout doubting. Some of the commentators fay, that ed. See the word translated [doubting,] signifies [disputation, P. 16. or contention.] I defire to know of you, Crito, whether that be the proper meaning of the word? Crito allowed it to be fo, and pointed to fome texts where it is so translated in our common English Testament. If that is the proper signification of the word, said Theophilus, I think it ought to have been so translated in this place. The Jews and judgizing Christians retained their fondnesse for the temple at Jerusalem; and thought that prayers, offered there, were more acceptable unto God. The Christian religion doth not confine our prayers to any one place more than another; but repreents them as every where equally acceptable unto Y 2 the

PartIII. the Deity, if they procede from pure and upright hearts. With a view to these things, the Apostle ordered Christians to pray every where, or in any convenient place, and affured them that they might do it with equal acceptance, provided they listed up boly bands, without wrath and disputation; i. e. if they took care to avoid that wrath and uncharitablenesse, those sierce disputations and violent contentions, of which the Jews and judaizing Christians were guilty, and which they were apt to mix even with their prayers and devotions.— Now what has this to do, with our being provided of our creed, before we are warranted to pray so much as for Faith itself? The Apostle had evidently no such thing in view, in his injunction.

Pyrrbo observed that his author, p. 37, &c. had quoted several texts to prove that " neither Jesus Christ, nor his Apostles, argued with their hearers; or laid before them any reasonable evidence; but dictated and prescribed to them in the most arbi-" trary manner, and expected their immediate, " humble submission; looking upon an extempore " fubscription as a matter of the greatest merit. Now let " us hear what you can fay to fuch passages?" Theophilus readily entered upon this part of the work, as fully convinced, that both as to Christ himself and his Apostles, the very reverse of the author's representation was exactly and literally true. First, as to our Savior (fays he) I have already shown above (p. 49.) that Jesus worked many unquestionable and beneficent miracles, and then be taught as one baving authority; and not as the Scribes, who had no fuch prophetic mission or authority. Your author intimates, p. 48. that Jesus had no intention to prove his own truth and character by bis miracles. That is exprefly contrary to what is faid, John x. 24, 25; 37; 38. and other places. Matt. xi. 2, &c. When John Baptist had, in prison, heard of the miracu

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lous works of Jefus, be fent two of his disciples, (most PARTIII. probably to fatisfie them; for he himself had been fully fatisfied long before,) and the questions they were to ask him were, Art thou (the Messah) be that was to come? Or are we to expect another? Jesus, in their presence, worked several miracles, and then faid, "Go and tell John what things you bear and " fee. The blind receive their fight; the lame walk; " the lepers are cleanfed; the deaf bear; the dead are " raised; and to the poor the gospel is preached; these " are the prophetic characters of the Meffiab; these " the works which I perform, in proof of the truth " of my mission and character; and blessed is be subo is " not offended in me, or who is not ashamed to own " fuch a person as I am, for the Messiah." Besides these already mentioned, you may at your leifure confult the following texts, where Jesus appealed to his miracles, in proof of his mission, character. or doctrine; or where miracles are intimated to have had these effects, viz. to make converts, or to confirm those that were already such. Matt. XI. 20, - 24. and xii. 28. and xvi. 1,-4. Mark ii. 10. and xvi. 20. Luke xii. 54,-57. John ii. 11; 23. and iv. 45. and v. 19, 20; 30,-43. and vii. 31. and xi. 15; 42; 45. and xii. 11; 37. and xiv. 10, 11. and xv. 22, 23, 24. and xvi. 30. Ass ii. 22. and x. 38. Now can it, after all these and other like proofs, be faid, with any modefty, truth, or justice, that Jesus bad no such intention to prove his own truth, and character, by these instances of bis power? - That that was an accidental thing? And that be bad no thought of procuring disciples by the influence of the spectacle of his working miracles? Can it be thought that the Apostles, tho' several of them had bad their education upon the water; could not reason as well in that case, as your auther; notwithstanding all the superior airs he gives himself of great acutenesse and uncommon penetration ?

PARTIII. tration? When a person worked miracles in their sight, and told them, it was to the intent they should believe, where was the difficulty of reasoning, or judging in such a case?— As to what is objected, concerning their being fearful at every turn of giving offence, and incurring reproof by any farther inquiry, even at times when they did not really apprehend his meanthe 36th ing.—The case was this,—they labored under the

text explained.
Mark ix.
32. See p.
37.

national, Jewish prejudices, and had been disputing, as they went along the road, which of them should be the greatest in Christ's kingdom, -which they thought was to be a temporal kingdom, and was then going to be set up in Judea. Jesus was willing to rectify that mistake; in order to which he represented himself as a spiritual, suffering Messah, and told them that he was to go up to Jerusalem, and there by wicked men be put to a violent death; but that be would rife again the third day. They having their heads full of a triumphant, temporal prince for their Messiab, who was to live for ever, understood not that plain declaration of his; and they hoped it might have some figurative meaning. But, out of fear that it should prove literal, or rather as fearing Jesus should discover their ambitious worldly views, they were afraid to ask bim, any further, what his meaning was. However, Jesus knew their thoughts, as well as if they had spoke them out in the plainest terms; and therefore, when he was come into the house, he took up a child, and fet him in the midft of them, and recommended to them the same innocence, meeknesse, and freedom from worldly, ambitious views; which were remarkable in fuch a child. Now to check that worldly spirit, and reprove them upon fuch an occasion, was perfectly wife and right in Jesus. And their being afraid of giving offence, or incurring reproof, when they had already exposed themselves by some improper conduct, was nothing

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nothing but a becoming modesty in them. What PARTIII. though, in some few cases, they did not really apprehend our Lord's meaning; that was owing to their criminal prejudices, their too eager defires of a temporal kingdom, and their great ambition of being exalted to the highest places at court: For Jesus himself spoke in the plainest terms. And, as to their continuing to believe in him, notwithstanding they did not always apprehend his meaning; that was highly rational; because they had seen enough to convince them that he was the great prophet, whom the Jews were daily expecting.-As they were abundantly convinced that he was fent of God, they depended upon his opening to them all that was proper, and wifely left it to him to do fo in his own time and way.

" My author, faid Pyrrho, wants to know why The 37th " Jesus did not gratify Herod, who wanted to see text explained, " some miracle done by bim." Theophilus replied, who- Luke ever considers the whole character of Herod Antipas, xxiii. 8. as given briefly in the New Testament, and more See p. 49. at large in Tolephus, will not be at a losse to account for our Savior's conduct towards him. He had married the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia Petrea, and lived with her a confiderable time: Then he put her away, and married Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, while his brother was yet alive. John Baptist, who was looked upon, by the Jews in general, as a prophet, told him his duty in the plainest terms. He, being a few, and knowing that these things were contrary to their law, and looking upon John also to be a righteous and good man, attended to him for fome time, and did feveral thing's upon his admonition. But, when he came to condemn his adultery and incest, and some other very flagrant crimes, it not only touched his own conscience, but exasperated Herodias, who was of a most ambitious, cruel, and revengeful temper, and had

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PARTIII. had the intire ascendent over Herod. And, rather than yield to the advice of that good man, and the dictates of his own conscience, he, at the instigation of Herodias, first threw John Baptist into prifon, and afterwards cut off his head ;-adding this notorious instance of injustice and cruelty to all his other wicked deeds .- Jesus knew his character. and therefore was not furprized, when he was told that Herod was desirous to put him to death; but fent him word that that was not in his power. Luke xiii. 31, &c. Go, tell that Fox (fays he) that crafty and cruel man; Behold I cast out demons and perform cures, to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfedted; or have finished my present work in this place, and within the dominions of Herod. But it is not in his power to put me to death; for he is governor of Galilee, and it cannot be that fuch a prophet should be put to death, but in Jerusalem .- Considering all these things, we may easily account for our Lord's behavior, when Herod wanted to fee some miracle done by bim, For Pontias Pilate, being very defirous to rid his hands of the affair of judging Jesus, as unwilling to disablige the malicious fews, or to condemn an innocent person, fent Jesus unto Herod , because Jesus had lived the greatest part of his life in Galilee, and therefore was looked upon as one of Herod's subjects. And he had a fair opportunity :- for Herod, being a Jew, was then come up to the passover, to the great city Jerusalem. He was very glad to fee Jefus, and had been defirous a long time to have had a fight of him; because he had heard many things about him, and boped to fee fome fign for miracle performed by bim. Jefus knew the man and his character perfectly well. He knew that he was very wicked, not for want of evidence, but directly contrary to knowlege and evidence. As Jefus knew the hearts of all men, he was allo fure, that Herod's wanting to fee fome miracle done by bim,

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bim, was no good promising symptom and mark of a PARTIII. towardly disposition for future discipleship. And his defiring fuch a thing from no other principle than that of gratifying a light curiofity, was what Jefus very rationally disapproved; tho' be was sollicitous to gain proselytes by such means (as that of working miracles) and conscious of baving something of the kind to produce to bim. And the event plainly showed that Fesus judged wifely. For, when Herod, had examined him as to many particulars, and Jesus answered nothing (as knowing the man, and how vain a thing it would have been to have made any reply) then Herod with his foldiers used him with great contempt; and, in the most scornful and insolent manner, dreffed him up in princely apparel (because he was accounted by many to be Messiab the Prince) and then fent him back to Pilate. A man of virtue, who had been fincerely defirous to have known the truth and certainty of Jesus's doctrine, or of the mighty works which were reported to have been done by him, would have examined witnesses, and got all the intelligence he could, and not have treated Jesus in that manner merely for his silence, and refuling to gratify his wanton curiofity. For he might have remembered that John Baptist, the forerunner of Fesus, had by him been put to death, for his daring to speak out, and tell him, in plain terms, many harsh and ungrateful truths.

"Culty arose from another text, viz. when the text ex"Nazarenes desired Jesus to work miracles among Matt. xiii.
"them, he resused. Or, as the Scripture expresses 58. See p.
"it, He did not many mighty works there, because of 67.
"their unbelief."—Theophilus said, the temper of the Nazarenes would, in like manner, account for Jesus's conduct towards them. He had been educated at Nazareth, from about two years old to thirty. After he was baptized and filled with the

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PARTIII. Holy Spirit, he began to preach and to work miracles, going about for that purpose throughout all Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem. He returned through Samaria, and converted fome of the Samaritanes. Then he went into other parts of Galilee, and acquired an extraordinary reputation, by his preaching and working miracles. After all these things, he came back to Nazareth, where he had been educated; and going (according to his usual custom) into the fynagogue on the fabbath-day, he flood up to read the Scriptures, (which any body might do at the request, or by the permission of the rulers of the fynagogue) and, having read a paffage out of Isaiab, which he intimated to be a prophefy concerning himself, he went on to discourse in fo excellent a manner, that the eyes of the whole congregation were intenfely fixed upon him; and they all bore him witneffe fo far as to wonder at the graceful words which proceded out of his mouth. But, tho' they applauded his eloquence, they rejected him and his doctrine, from the most idle and groundlesse prejudices, viz. because they had known him from a child, were acquainted with all his relations and friends, and were fure that he had had no learned education, - which was the most evident proof of his having received his extraordinary knowlege by prophetic illumination .- Jesus was apprized of their rooted and inveterate prejudices, and faid, You will very likely, " apply to me this proverb, Physician beal thyself; " i. e. work as many and as great miracles among us, " your own townsmen and neighbors, as you have done in e other towns and villages. But I know it will be to 56 no purpose. As, therefore, there were many " widows in Ifrael, in the days of Elijah, when there was a famine in the land for three years and a half, so and the prophet was not fent to relieve any of them " by miracle, but one poor widow, who lived in Sase repta,

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" repta, in the territory of the Sidonians. And, as in PARTIII.

" the times of Elisha, there were many leprous per-" fons in Ifrael, and yet he miraculously cured only

" Naaman, a Syrian. So, tho' I have worked many

"miracles in other places, where I had a prospect of

" doing good; yet, as I know there is no fuch prof-

pectramong you, I do not think it proper to com-"ply with your request."-They immediately showed that Jefus knew their hearts. For, when they heard these things, they were filled with wrath; and the whole congregation unanimously rose up, feized upon Jesus, and, in a violent manner, hurried him out of the fynagogue, and out of the town also, with a delign to throw him down the precipice of that hill, on which their town flood. And they would certainly in that manner have put him to death, if Jesus had not, by miracle, suddealy rendered himself invisible, and passed through the midst of them without being discerned. And fo, by working that one miracle, he, for the prefent, escaped out of their hands. (See Luke iv. 16, -30.) From that time, Jefus moved his stated habitation; and, leaving Nazareth, he fettled not many miles from them, at the town of Capernaum, where he met with a much better reception. There, and in all the neighboring towns and villages, he continued to preach and work miracles; whereby the inhabitants of Nazareth had frequent opportunities of hearing of his fame; or feeing his miracles, if they pleased ;- tho' he did not reside among them, nor as yet return to them. It is reckoned to have been above a year fince he had been there, and they had made the attempt upon his life of Sorlong a time did he give them, to lay safide their anger and criminal prejudices. And, if they had had a love of truth, he now afforded them another opportunity for the reception of it. For he returned to Nazareth; and going into the

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PARTIII. synagogue on the sabbath-day, he again began to teach them. But they immediately discovered the fame narrow, envious spirit, the same hardened, perverse turn of mind, as before. For, tho' they were aftonished at his learning and wisdom; yet as they had known Joseph, the carpenter, his reputed father, and still knew his other relations, who were poor people in that town, they could not be persuaded to pay any regard to his doctrine: neither were they properly affected with the evidence of those miracles, which he had wrought in all the neighboring towns and villages. which he faid again, as he had done before, that a prophet is no where so little esteemed as among his own countrymen and acquaintance; and then the Evangelist brings in the words now under consideration, viz. that be did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.—Theophilus said, he wondered that the author had not quoted the words (as certain writers commonly do) from Mark vi. 5, 6. viz. that be could there do no mighty works, because of their unbelief; unlesse he was afraid of that expression, I fave that be laid his bands upon a few fick folks, and bealed them.] However, as that manner of expressing it, may be a difficulty to some, I would add, that St. Mark evidently means no more than that be could not confiftently with his wisdom and goodnesse, or with the end and design of his going about preaching and working miracles. Thus we fay very commonly, "I cannot prevail "with my felf, or my friend, to do this or " that;" when we mean, not that we want power, but inclination, to do it. And this manner of fpeaking was very common among the antients. Thus, Gen. xxxvii. 4. Joseph's brethren, the more their father loved him, the more they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto bim; i. e. they did not choose to do so, for they had power to have fpoken -EHVIL

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spoken peaceably, or kindly, to their brother, if PARTILL. they had pleased. Acts iv. 20. When two of the Apostles, Peter, and John, were brought before the Jewish Sanbedrim, and were by them charged to preach no more in the name of Jesus, they said, we cannot but speak the things, which we have seen and beard. I John iii. 9. " Every man, that is born " of God, doth not commit fin; but the feed of " a new and spiritual life remaineth in him; and " be cannot sin, because he is born of God." Rev. ii. 2. Fefus Christ fais to the angel of the church of Epbefus, " I know thy works, and thy labor, and " thy patience, and that thou canst not bear such " as are wicked." In like manner, we are told that Xenophon hath faid, " drunkards, lewd and " covetous persons, cannot refrain from the objects, " in which they have been accustomed to take pleasure."—In all which cases by [cannot] must be understood [will not:] Or that they do not want power to do otherwise, but that they choose to act fo and fo.—And it is evident that St. Mark did not mean, that Jesus had no power to have worked miracles there, at this time,—any more than St. Matthew; for he hath mentioned his performing fome miracles, i. e. curing a few persons that had diseases; which was nothing to what he had done in other places, and what he could and would have done there, if he had feen it would have anfwered his purpose. The reason, therefore, why he did not many mighty works there, was their unbelief. He saw their spirit of perversenesse, and that they were fo much bent upon their own wicked ways, that all his attempts to reform them were vain and fruitlesse. Jesus always acted wisely, and never more fo, than in refusing to work more miracles among a people where there was no prospect of doing any good. Tho' they had made an attempt upon his life, yet he returned to them to feek

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PARTIII, feek their welfare. But, when the fame fpirit of inveterate prejudice and intractablenesse discovered itself, he would not labor in vain, nor cast pearls before swine; who, instead of valuing them, would turn again and rend bim. He worked no miracle by way of revenge, made no attempt upon their lives; but left them to cool and confider, or go on and perish without excuse. With what truth. or justice, could your author, therefore, fay, that Fesus gave them up instantly to the bardnesse of their bearts; that be would not permit them those accidental opportunities of seeing any of bis miracles, which might possibly bave alarmed their stubborn minds into a better state, and prompted a desire of farther instruction? When we are affured that he worked miracles at Ferusalem, at the public festivals; -that he performed miracles also in all the neighboring towns and villages; [many of which they either did fee, or might have feen; and that even at Nazareth itself, before the face of these his enemies, he laid his hands on some diseased persons and cured them? It was kind in him not to procede, when he faw that it would not turn to their advantage, but to their greater condemnation. Here, therefore, was a great deal of the long-suffering character displayed in their behalf. He did not strike them dead, in stantly, when they attempted to murther him He did not return immediately, left he should ex afperate them.-No; he left them above a year to confider the evidence of his mission and charac ter; and then came again to feek their happinesse as being very unwilling that they should perish, no withstanding their unrighteous and cruel treat ment of him. It was not in them a tardy gent and innocent scruples, but obstinacy and perversness the most criminal and inveterate prejudices. An divine wisdom knows, in all cases, what eviden

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" other texts, to prove that Jesus discouraged the 39th other texts, to prove that Jesus discouraged the text, John persons, who wanted to see him work miracles, iv. 48. explained. or came desirous to canvasse the evidence. One see p. 49.

"was, Jesus's answer, when he was applied to, for an instance of his extraordinary affistance, in favor of the nobleman's child,—unlesse you see figns and wonders, you will not believe?"—Theophilus

observed that Jesus had just escaped out of the hands of the Nazarenes, who had attempted to throw him down a precipice, and kill him. Several other of the Galileans, notwithstanding, received him, having seem the miracles which he had done, at the passover, at Jerusalem; for they

had gone up to that feast. Among other places in Galilee, Jesus went again to Cana, where he had, publicly at a marriage feast, turned water into wine. It was some miles from Capernaum. And

at Capernaum; there was a person of distinction, that belonged to Herod's court, and his son lay at the point of death. When he heard that Jesus was come back from Andre into Galilee he went to

come back from Judea into Galilee, he went to Cana, to speak with Jesus, and to desire him to come down to Capernaum and cure his son. By the

miracles he had already worked, Jesus had given clear proofs of his divine mission, from whence the nobleman might have argued that he could

have cured his fon at a distance, and needed not to have gone down, from Cana to Capernaum, to

effect the miracle. Some would read our Savior's words by way of interrogation, thus, " unleffe you

" fee figns and wonders, will you not believe? i. e. Will you not believe that I am able to work this mi-

"racle, unlesse I go down to Capernaum, and you fee me perform it there?" The nobleman (either

not understanding this gentle reproof, through the

grief and anxiety he was under, for his fon; or questioning whether Jesus could cure him at so great a distance) repeted his request with more vehemence, and faid, Sir, be pleased to come down to Capernaum, and cure my son, before be dies. Jesus (that he might fully explain himfelf, correct the man's mistake, and manifest that he approved of his Faith, and had power to work miracles at a distance) said, Go your way, your son is recovered. The nobleman understood Jesus, and then believing, or being convinced that he could work miracles at a distance, without seeing the person, or being present,—went home fully satisfied; and found, upon inquiry, that his fon recovered the very moment that Jesus pronounced the words .- Upon which, he and all his family became from that time the disciples of Jesus. Now, consider it in this view, as it really stands in the Evangelists, and what proof does there arise from hence, that Jesus discouraged such as wanted to see a miracle done by him, or came desirous to canvasse the evidence? It is plain the nobleman's request was readily complied with, and his fon cured immediately, without Jesus's going down to Capernaum. This was certainly granting the nobleman greater incouragement and stronger evidence than he defired, or expected. And, instead of an objection, is a most eminent instance of the power and goodnesse of Jesus, and a most remarkable argument in favor of a rational Faith.

The 40th text, Mat. xii. 38, &c. explained. See p. 38; 49.

Pyrrbo alleged other texts to the same purpose, and asked, " why Jesus checked the Pharisees for " asking a sign, and refused to comply with their " request?" Theophilus observed that there were more texts than one, refered to; and that he would explain them according to their order in the harmony of the four gospels. As to the first (fais he) I have already taken notice of the story which immediately goes before it, viz. when Jejus 10HIN

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had cured one that was thought to have had a PARTIII. demon, and who was actually both blind and dumb, the Pharifees gave it that perverse and malicious turn,—that he cast out demons by a confederacy with Beelzebub, the prince of demons. For that high act of wickednesse he severely reproved them, as they deserved.—With the same spirit of perversenesse, certain of the Scribes and Pharisees said, Master, we would see a sign from thee. The miracles he had already worked were either denied, or ascribed to evil spirits, and all that evidence had made no impression; but they were, neverthelesse, demanding new evidence; not out of any love to truth, but out of a light and wanton curiofity, pure scepticism, and endlesse cavil. Jesus never refused working a miracle at the request of those who came to him, either for the fake of conviction, or for the relief of themselves or their friends; but (knowing the hearts of all men) he knew how to diffinguish, and therefore answered these Pharisees, " an evil and an adulterous generation seek-" etb after a fign (as if I had not hitherto worked " any miracles among them) I will not now gra-" tify their curiofity, neither will I leave them " without a fufficient proof of my mission; but " for the grand evidence, I refer them to my re-" furrection from the dead, which may be aptly " compared to Jonah's coming out alive, after he " had been three days in the belly of the whale. " And take notice that others have repented, or " grown more pious and virtuous, upon lesse evi-" dence; who may, therefore, justly rife up in " judgment against this generation and condemn " them." The Pharisees and Sadducees are again The 41st

recorded to have made a like request. — Jesus text, Mat. xvi. 1, &c. had already worked almost innumerable mira-or Mark cles, by sea and by land, in the wildernesse, wii. 11, in the fields and high-ways, in the synagogues, &c. See page 1 38; 49.

PARTIII. in villages, and in larger towns. After all which they tempted him, and defired that he would show them a fign from beaven; — that fign I suppose, mentioned, Dan. vii. 13, 14. of the Son of Man's coming in the clouds of beaven, to take upon him universal dominion. But the time was not yet come for his taking possession of all power both in heaven and earth. And, therefore, our Lord answered them, that they had evidence enough already, if they would attend to it. You, know, fais he, a red evening is a fign that " the next day will be fair; and you likewise understand that a red, lowering morning is a fign " of a bad day. You hypocrites, who pretend " to demand new evidence of me, as if you had a mind to become my disciples, and could not judge of the evidence you have already had. "You plainly show that you do not want capacity, but honesty and candor of mind; otherwise you would easily discern the signs of the times;—you would easily perceive that this is the "time, which was predicted, for the coming of the Meffiah, and that by my miracles and all " my behavior I am the very person." Your author hath intimated, p. 36. that our Savior bimself did not lay the arguments and proofs of his mission frankly before his disciples, and then give them time calmly to consider of their force. And he hath, in other places, infinuated that Jesus never appealed to the judgments or understandings of his hearers: - Whereas, furely, here is the most plain and evident appeal to their understandings, and a clear intimation, that, if they made use of their reason in matters of religion, as they did about common occurrences, they would readily find out truth, and be led to act right. And, confidering how well they reasoned about other things, and how prejudiced they were against religious truth, and the most remarkable

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markable and abundant evidence, be fighed deeply PARTIII. in fairit, and gave them the fame answer, as before, viz. that to that wicked and adulterous generation, there should no sign be given, but that of his refurrection; for that was to be the grand evidence of his mission and doctrine :- After that just reproof, he left them, and went elsewhere. - Your author, indeed, is so tender of the character of those wicked and perverse Jews, that he calls their seeking a sign, or miracle, their defiring a rational evidence of their discipleship; which, if he [Christ] had indeed appealed to their understandings, had been so far from any thing criminal or blame-worthy, that it had been in all reason their indispensable duty. And then he sais, with a fneer, whereas it was, it seems, in Faith, an unwarrantable, presumptuous, and wanton curiosity.—But I would put another case, and let him try to answer the fame fort of difficulty; the visible works of creation and providence clearly prove that there is a God. Some have, notwithstanding, denied, or called in question that important truth. would it be any ways abfurd or unreasonable, if, to one that should demand further evidence, a wife man should fay, an evil and perverse person seeketh after a proof of a thing, for which there is already abundant evidence; but there shall no new evidence be given unto bim: And should, withal, expresse some grief and concern of mind, to see such a man overlook the evidence already afforded? It is true (whether your author will allow it, or no,) that there is in every case a certain degree of evidence allowed men, beyond which God fees not fit to go. And it is great folly and perversenesse to neglect the evidence we already have, and to be perpetually feeking after more.—There is a third text, where The 42d they are faid to have fought of him a fign from text, Luke beaven; but, as their demand and Jesus's answer xi. 16; 29, are exactly the fame, as before; what has been 38; 49.

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PART III. said, as to the two fore-going texts, will be sufficient for the explanation of this also.—Pyrrbo expressed some surprize to find that Theophilus had so carefully studied these points. However (sais he) my author has argued from many other texts, of which I expect your solution. But my time is now elapsed, and therefore we must defer them to our next meeting.

## DIALOGUE II.

CRITO put them in mind that they were confidering the texts, which the author had quoted, and which (as Theophilus alleged) were perverted and abused. Pyrrbo, you are at liberty to go on and propose any other difficulty, arising from one or more passages of Scripture. My next difficulty (faid Pyrrbo) in what my author has mentioned; p. 49, &c. viz. " that Jesus was so far from baving the least thought of procuring disciples, from the influence of mens beholding his miracles, that a certain degree, and that no ordinary one, of previous confidence and persuasion, appears to have been con-" stantly stipulated for, beforeband, to intitle them to " bave their applications at all listened to, or regarded; " and to be the sole measure and rule of dispensing those " occasional favors. Wherever we find them confered, " it was still perceiving that the patient had Faith to be bealed. He had observed, p. 37. that the " language of the gospel was, believe you that I am " able to do this? And again, p. 50. he goes on " thus, wherever there was the least room to distrust " such a preparatory provision, be seems to capitulate " and guard with especial care, that a miracle should " not be even accidentally a means of conversion, by " dismissing the petitioner with a conditional remedy, " which was to take effect, only in proportion to his se present qualifications of the kind; and of which his se successe

" fuccesse was to be the sure test. According to your PARTIH. " Faith be it unto you, where [were] the terms? " As elsewhere be attributes professedly the whole efficacy " of a miracle, that had taken place, to that single " preliminary. Thy Faith (that of which I found " thee already possessed) hath made thee whole."-When Pyrrbo had thus stated the difficulty, Theophilus said, I want to know from whence it appears that this previous confidence and persuasion were constantly stipulated for, before-band, with all those that would. bave their applications at all listened to, or regarded, &c. Your author must have some history which I know nothing of; or he must in this (as well as fome other particulars) have forged history. What a number of miracles is Jesus said to have worked, where we read nothing of this previous stipulation? Who was required to believe before-hand, when Jesus, at a marriage-feast in Cana, turned water into wine? John ii. 1, &c. Or, when he drove the buyers and fellers out of the court of the temple? John ii. 13, &c. Or, when he performed the other miracles, which he did at that paffover? John iv. 45. Or, when he rendered himself invisible to the Nazarenes? Luke iv. 30. Or, when he cured the lunatic, or epileptic boy, in the synagogue at Capernaum? Mark i. 21, &c. Luke iv. 31, &c. Or, when he cured Peter's wife's mother? Matt. viii. 14, &c. Matt. i. 29, &c. Luke iv. 38, &c. Or, when he healed the vast numbers, of whom we have no more than a general account? Matt. viii. 16, &c. Mark i. 32, &c. Luke iv. 40, &c. Or, how doth it appear that any Faith was stipulated for, before-band, when Jesus niraculously inabled his disciples to catch that very arge draught of fishes? Luke v. 4, &c. Or, when he went about all Galilee, teaching in their ynagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingom, and healing all manner of ficknesse, and all manner

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PARTIII. manner of diseases among the people: By which means his fame went throughout all Syria, and the people voluntarily brought unto him all fick perfons, that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those that was possessed with demons, and the lunatic, and the paralytic, and he healed them? Matt. iv. 23, 24. The leper, indeed, acknowleged the power of Jesus to heal him, upon which he was immediately cured, Matt. viii. 2, &c. Mark i. 40, &c. Luke v. 12, &c. but it doth not appear that Jesus had before-hand, stipulated with bim, fo much as to acknowlege his power. A more rational account, and an account more agreeable to the gospel-history, both with respect to him and others, who applied to our Lord upon fuch occasions, is, that having heard of the many miracles Jesus had already worked; they from of themselves, concluded that he had power to work other miracles, and relieve themor their friends also.—How does it appear that there was any Faith stipulated for, before-hand, in the great multitude that came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities? Luke v. 15. The paralytic man was brought upon his couch by four men, and let down through the top of a flat-roofed house, into the room where Jesus was siting and teaching the people; but there is no infinuation of his having stipulated for Faith before-band; or that he had ever before that feen the man, or his friends who brought him, Matt. ix. 1, &c. Mark ii. 1, &c. Luke i. 17, &c. They very rationally concluded that, as Jesus had cured others, he could cure this man. And their Faith was well-grounded; for Jesus immediately and perfectly cured him. If your author has any other authentic bistory, besides that of the four gospels, let him produce it. But, according to that history, there was no Faith stipulated for, before

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before-band, with the paralytic man, whom Jesus PARTIII. cured at the pool of Bethesda, in Ferusalem, John v. 1, &c. Nor, in the case of the man with the withered hand, whom Jesus cured, before a whole congregation, in the fynagogue, Matt. xii. 9, &c. Mark iii. 1, &c. Luke vi. 6, &c. Nor in the great multitude that followed him, and he healed all of them, that had need of healing, Matt. xii. 15. Mark iii. 7, &c. Nor in the large concourse of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases. And they that were vexed with unclean spirits, came alfo, and they were healed. And the whole multitude fought to touch him; for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all, Luke vi. 17, &c. How strongly and rationally did the Roman captain at Capernaum argue, when he defired Jesus to cure his paralytic fervant—" If I, who am but an inferior officer, and under the command of " others, can neverthelesse command the soldiers. " who are under me, as well as my own fervants, " and be readily obeyed, much more may it be ex-" pected that Jesus, who has such a miraculous " power, can command away a disease, even with-" out so much as going to the place, where the sick " person lies?" Mat. viii. 5. &c. Luke vii. 1. &c. Here was no Faith stipulated for, before-hand; but Jesus having already worked a vast number of mifacles, and even cured the nobleman's fon at Caernaum, while he himself was at Cana, which was t the distance of some miles; the Centurion argued very justly, that he must be able to perform this piracle, with the greatest ease, and at a distance lso.—Theophilus proceding to the three particular s any nstances, which are left upon record in the four ospels, of Jesus's raising persons from the dead, ng to egan thus; I know (Pyrrbo) some authors have for,

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PARTIII. pretended that diseased people, by having a strong Faith in Jesus's power to cure them, might, by their strong imaginations, help forward the cure. But pray, how could Faith be stipulated for, before. band, with a dead man? Or, how could his imagination in the least conduce to his resurrection from the dead? According to the harmony of the four gospels, the first instance, that is particularly related, of Jesus's raising any person from the dead, was that of the widow of Nain's fon, Luke vii. 11, And, as Jesus's meeting the corpse, when they were carrying it out to burial, was purely cafual, there was no preparatory work of any kind. Jefus himself was walking along the road, attended by his own disciples and a great multitude of people; and there was much people of that city, coming out of the gate, attending the funeral. Amidst fuch a vast concourse, - Jesus, without any difficulty, or preparation, went up to the bier and touched it, and raised the dead youth to life again, merely by faying, Young man, I fay unto thee, arife. Here was no Faith perceived in the person, on whom the miracle was worked; no stipulation before-hand, with any person, in order to Jesus's working this miracle; nor fo much as a petition, or application, made to him by the friends of the deceased. Your author's account appears to be mere forgery and calumny; which, in the efteem of fome hafty readers, may fully the character of Jesus; but, in the account of all that think and examine, must needs recoil upon the person, who hath invented it, out of his own brain.—As to the other two refurrection miracles, viz. that of Jairus's daughter, Mat. ix. 18, &c. Mark v. 22, &c. Luke viii. 41, &c. and that of Lazarus, John xi. 1, &c. there is no occasion to inlarge upon them; because it is evident, at first fight, that there could be no Fail stipulated for, before-band, with the persons, on

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whom these miracles were worked .- Their friends did, PARTIII. indeed, acknowlege their Faith in Christ's power, and apply to him for the miracles; which was highly reasonable and every way becoming.-Again, there is no evidence that the persons, spoken of, Mat. xi. 2, &c. Luke vii. 21, &c. were previously required to believe; though, while the messengers of John Baptist were present, Jesus cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind, he gave fight. And then bid them go and tell John what things they had heard and feen, viz. the blind receive their fight; the lame walk; the lepers are cleanfed; the deaf hear, and the dead are raised.—How doth it appear that there was any Faith stipulated for, before-band, in those that were healed of evil spirits and infirmities, mentioned? Luke viii, 2. Or, in the demoniac, who was both blind and dumb, to whom Jesus restored both speech and sight? Mat. xii. 22, &c. Or, when Jesus miraculously appealed the storm? Mat. viii. 23, &c. Mark iv. 36, &c. Luke viii. 22, &c. Or, when he cured the one or two demoniacs? Mat. viii. 28, &c. Mark v. 1, &c. Luke viii. 26, &c. Or, in the woman that was cured of a bloody flux; who thought to have obtained a cure without Jesus's taking notice of it? Mat. 18. 20, &c. Mark v. 25, &c. Luke viii. 43, &c. There is not one word in the four gospels, of Jesus's Ripulating for Faith, before-hand, with the demoniac, or dumb man, whom he cured, Mat. ix. 32, &c. Nor, when he fed five thousand perlons with five loaves and two fishes, in the wildernesse, Mat. xiv. 13, &c. Mark vi. 32, &c. Luke ix. 10, &c. John vi. 1, &c. Nor, when he walked upon the waves of the sea, and afterwards stilled the raging tempest, Mat. xiv. 24, &c. Mark vi. 47, &c. John vi. 16, &c. Nor, when the people pread his fame, and brought the fick from all Bb

PARTIII. the country round about, wherever they heard he was. And whitherfoever he entered into villages. or cities, or country, they laid the fick in the ftreets: and befought him that they might touch, if it were but the border of his garment, and as many as touched him were made perfectly whole, Mat. xiv. 34, &c. Mark vi. 53, &c. It doth not appear that he stipulated for Faith, before-hand, in the Canaanitifb woman; who, upon the fame of his many miracles, applied to him for the cure of her daughter, Mat. xv. 21, &c. Mark vii. 24, &c. Nor, when they brought unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, whom Jesus miraculously cured, Mark vii. 32, &c. Nor, when the great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others; and cast them down at Jesus's feet, and he healed them; infomuch that the multitude wondered, when they faw the dumb to fpeak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to fee, Mat. xv. 30, 31. Nor, when he fed the four thousand men with five loaves and a few little fishes, Mat. xv. 32, &c. Mark viii. 1, &c. After such astonishing numbers of miracles, worked in a great variety of times and places, and upon fuch multitudes of persons, how unreasonable were those perverse Jews, who wanted to see fome other fign, or miracle, as a proof of his divine mission? Mat. xvi. 1, &c. Mark viii. 11, &c. and again, Luke xi. 16. But of this I have

taken notice already.]-We read nothing of Faith's

being stipulated for, before hand, in the case of the

blind man, to whom Jesus restored sight at Bethsaida,

Mark viii. 22, &c. Nor, in the three Apostles,

in order to their beholding Christ's transfiguration on the mount, and hearing the voice from heaven, declaring him to be the well-beloved Son of God, i

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Mat. xvii. 1. &c. Mark ix. 1. &c. Luke ix. 27, PARTIN. Esc. Nor, in the man cured at Ferusalem, who had been blind from his birth, John ix. 1, &c. Nor, in the dumb man, to whom he gave the use of speech, Luke xi. 14. Nor, in the woman, who had been eighteen years bowed down, whom Fefus cured in the synagogue, on the sabbath day, Luke xiv. 1, &c. Nor, in the ten lepers, that were cleansed by Jesus, as he went up to Jerusalem. Luke xvii. 11, &c. Nor, in any person, when he miraculously escaped from the Jews at Jerusalem, as he had done before from the Nazarenes, John x. 39. Nor, in the great multitude, which followed him beyond Fordan, and he healed them there, Mat. xix. 1, &c. Nor, in Bar-timeus, and the other blind man, whom Jesus cured near Jericho, Mat. xix. 29, &c. Mark x. 46, &c. Luke xvi. 35, &c. Nor, when he drove the buyers and fellers, a fecond time, out of that court of the temple, called the Court of the Gentiles, - which I take to have been also done by miracle, Mat. xxi. 12. Mark xi. 15, &c. Luke xix. 45. Nor, in the blind and lame, who (foon after) came to him in that court of the temple, and were healed by him, Mat. xxi. 14. With whom did Jesus stipulate, before-band, for Faith, when he cursed the barren fig-tree? Mat. xxi. 17, &c. Mark xi. 12, &c. And finally, how doth it appear that Faith was stipulated for, with any person, either before or after, when Jesus, by a touch, healed the ear of Malchus, one of the persons that was fent to apprehend him; whose ear Peter, in his rash zeal, had cut off with a sword? Luke xxii. 49, &c.-Must it not procede from grosse ignorance, or fomething worfe, for any man roundly to affert, that previous confidence and persuasion appear to have been constantly stipulated for, before-hand, &c. when, in the gospel-history, no such thing appears? For, from that history, it plainly appears to B b 2

PARTIII. have been fo far from being constantly fo, that it was fo but in a very few instances.—Pyrrbo seemed astonished at the evidence which Theophilus produced, in opposition to his author's strong and confident affertion, and began to doubt of his author's veracity. At least, fais he, he must have read the four gospels very curforily, and not be much skilled in these things.—And then he ought not to have ventured writing upon fuch a subject, 'till he had examined, Upon which Crito observed, that one had need to be upon their guard, in perufing an author, who had attempted to impose so grosly upon his readers; and that there was occasion closely to examine, and detect his misrepresentations.—However (faid Pyrrbo) I hope, Theophilus, you will allow that there were some cases, were Faith was previously required. For I confesse, I now doubt of its being constantly fo. Yes (replied Theophilus) there are a few instances; and confidering the vast number of miracles which Jesus worked, there are really but a few. I am not afraid of acknowleging the truth; but will now produce all the instances, which even look that way; and examine them, as they rife. For I apprehend they were all wife and reasonable. As to the instance of the nobleman, whose son Jesus cured at Capernaum,—that has been considered at large already, p. 175, &c.

plained.

The 43d The next instance is what our Lord said to the text, Mat. two blind men, whom he was about to cure,—Beix. 28. ex- lieve you that I am able to do this? To which they an-See p. 37. swered, Yes, Lord. We learn from the preceding verses that Jesus having cured a woman of a bloody flux, and raised Jairus's daughter from the dead, his fame went out into all that country. And, upon the credible report of his former miracles, these two blind men believed that Jesus was able to cure them also. Accordingly they applied to him for a cure. What Jesus, therefore, asked them

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em ernconcerning their believing, was not a previous fti- PARTIII. pulating for Faith, but a desiring them to declare that Faith, which they had already very rationally acquired. And, when they readily declared their belief in his power, he touched their eyes, and faid, According to your Faith be it unto you. Now, who The AAth ever considers that Jesus worked miracles, in order text, Mat. to confirm his mission and doctrine, will easily ix. 29. See discern that there was nothing unreasonable in all P. 50. this.—The support of Peter, when he defired to walk upon the waves of the fea, was in proportion to his Faith, Mat. xiv. 28, &c. And he was justly rebuked for his want of Faith, or for his doubting of his master's power to support him, after he had feen him work fo many miracles,-had received from him a power to work miracles himfelf; and had before this actually gone out, and exercised that power.—A fourth instance of this kind is recorded, Mark ix. 23, 24. A certain boy had the epilepsy, whereby he was rendered deaf and dumb,—was subject to very dreadful fits, and was almost wasted away. The father of that boy came to the disciples of Jesus in the absence of their master, to desire them to cure his son. But the disciples could not cure him, merely for want of a firm persuasion of Jesus's power to inable them to do it. Which doubting in them was very unreasonable, as he had already sent them out to preach and work miracles, and they had gone out, and by his power worked miracles. He, therefore, very justly said unto them, " O faitblesse ge-" neration, how long shall I continue with you? How " many miracles shall I work? How long shall I bear " with you, who are so slow of apprehension, and " cannot gather, from all that I have done, how " fully able I am to affift you to perform many more " miracles; as easily as I inabled you to perform " what you have effected?"-Having to this effect chid

PARTIII chid the disciples, he ordered the boy to be brought unto him. Just as he approached, he happened to fall into one of his fits, rolling upon the ground. gnashing with his teeth, and manifesting the greatest anguish. Jesus asked his father, how long he had been subject to this disorder? He said, he had been fo from a child; and that feveral times he had fallen into the fire, and into the water. And if you can do any thing (fais he) have compassion on us. and relieve us. Jesus said unto him, If you can believe, all things are possible unto bim that believeth. And, immediately the father of that boy anfwered with tears in his eyes, I believe, Lord, belo mine unbelief. When Jefus faw the people crouding about the boy, as he laid there in his agonies, he took him up, and easily and perfectly performed the cure.-Now, what is there unreasonable in all this? Jesus worked miracles to prove his prophetic mission and character, and he required of some of the persons, who came to implore his help, to acknowlege they believed he was indued with a miraculous power, and that they, or their friends, owed the benefit of their cure (not to medicine, or to chance and accident, or to the common course of nature; but) to his extraordinary power and goodnesse. Surely, nothing could have The 45th been more just and reasonable.—There are three text, Mat instances of Jesus's saying to the person whom ix. 22. See he cured, Thy Faith bath made thee whole. The first is recorded, Mat. ix. 22. Mark v. 34. Luke viii. 48. The second is found, Mark x. 52. Luke xviii. 42. The third is mentioned, Luke xvii. 19.

had heard of Jesus's numerous miracles. They

from thence infered he had power to relieve them.

They accordingly applied to him for a cure.

Upon which Jefus intimated that he approved of

their Faith, and accordingly granted their request.

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planation; and then reads the text thus, "thy Faith PARTIII. " (that of which I found thee already possessed) hath " made thee whole." If he would thereby infinuate that Jesus stipulated that they should believe him to be the Messiab, before he would work a miracle at their request; that is intirely groundlesse. That they should believe he could help them, before they came to feek relief from him, was quite natural. That they should also acknowlege their benefactor, was nothing but a becoming gratitude And the curing any person, who would have refused to have made such an acknowlegment, could not have answered the end of Jesus's coming, which was not to heal difeafed perfons, and confer merely temporal bleffings, but to prove his own mission, to ascertain his great character. and to lead men to everlasting happinesse. - Pyrrbo faid to Theophilus, you know I am given to doubt, and to fuspend my judgment, upon all occasions; but I hate misrepresentation and dishonesty in friend or enemy. And you have produced for much evidence to show that my author is either dishonest, or very ignorant, that I confesse I have enough of the conversation at present, and must defire you to defer the further canvassing this subject to another opportunity. So ended the converlation this evening.

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## DIALOGUE III.

AT their next meeting Pyrrbo produced another objection, occasioned by several texts in the sour gospels;—the solution of which he required of Theophilus. "It must seem strange (sais my author, "p. 48.) if our Lord had any such meaning as to conwince by these [miraculous] works, that he should always be so remarkably upon the reserve, in that respect, "whenever he happened among unbelieving company: "That

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PARTIII. " That he should be so particularly sparing of these sup-~ 4 pased arguments, among the very persons, who seemed most to want them. More plainly still, that be bad es no fuch intention to prove his own truth and character. by these instances of his power, he often industriously avoided that accidental consequence, and took particuec lar care to prevent their ever coming to public notice, by dismissing most of the company and attendants, be-" fore he began to procede to the operation. My author " goes on, with other difficulties of the like kind, " which I will produce, when Theophilus has an-" fwered what has been mentioned." Theophilus replied, that this was another proof and instance of the ignorance of the author, or fomething worfe, And, if I was not afraid of being tedious (fais he) I could go over all Christ's miracles again, and as clearly show under this head, as I did under the last, how very far it was from being always the case. As to most of the miracles, recorded in the four gospels, there might be, and most probably were, unbelievers and enemies, as well as the friends and disciples of Jesus, present when they were performed.—It is plain that the paralytic man at Capernaum, who was let down through the top of a flat-roofed house, into the room were Jesus was fiting and teaching, was miraculoufly cured before enemies and unbelievers, as well as before the disciples of Jesus, Mat. ix. 1, &c. Mark ii. 1, &c. Luke v. 17, &c. For there were his implacable enemies, the Scribes and Pharifees, and doctors of the law: And of them not a few; for they were come out of every town in Galilee and Judea, and even as far as from the city Jerusalem. And yet, notwithstanding the presence of so much unbelieving company, the power of the Lord was prefent to heal: And Jesus actually cured that paralytic man, openly, before them all.—The enemies of Jejus knew very well that the man, who was cured

at the pool of Bethesda, had been ill a long time, PARTIII. and was now well again; and they were fo fully convinced that Fesus had cured him, that they therefore fought to take away his life, John v. 1. &c. The man, who had the withered hand, was cured by Jesus publicly in the synagogue, before both Scribes and Pharifees, who were his mortal enemies, Mat. xii. 9, &c. Mark iii. 1, &c. Luke vi. 6, &c. For, when they could not deny the fact, nor answer his arguments for the propriety of working that miracle on the fabbath-day, they again fought to take away his life. He therefore, for safety, withdrew from thence, and great multitudes followed bim, and be bealed them all. And strictly charged them that they should not make him manifest;not that he defired them to conceal his miracles. but that they should not discover the place where he was; left his enemies, the Scribes and Pharifees, who fought his life, should perfue him.-Again; there were great multitudes present, when he pronounced the cure of the servant of the Roman captain, at Capernaum, Mat. viii. 5, &c. As likewife, when he raised the widow of Nain's son from the dead, Luke vii. 11, &cc. As to his dismissing most of the company, when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead, there were several obvious reasons for it; he was desirous that the house See Mr. should be quiet; that the persons, he took along Lardner's with him, might be fedate and composed; that Vindicathey might without disturbance, or the least inter-tion of ruption, attend to his working the miracle; our bleffed that they might have a near, perfect, and distinct Saviour's view, and mind every thing that passed. There miracles, were the father and mother of the young woman, P. 68; and three of the disciples, viz. Peter, James and John, as well as Jesus. There were, therefore, five witnesses; a sufficient number to attest any fact. As there was, most probably, a bed in the room,

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PARTIII. on which the corpse was laid; five persons, besides Jesus, might be as many as the room could hold. to fland at full eafe, and view the miracle clearly, and without interruption. The persons, who were admitted, were the most proper persons of any, The father and mother, as best acquainted with the young woman's case, the most unwilling of any to admit a deceit, and to take another person. a stranger who had not died, instead of their own daughter. Three of his disciples, who were to be witnesses of his works, and who could not have been perfuaded to undertake the difficult work of preaching the gospel, after their Master's removal, without good proofs of his divine mission; who might alfoaffure persons of these things from their own fight. -Nor was it any improper referve, that be admitted no more; neither did it tend to keep the miracle from public notice, or in the least prevent such a consequence as convincing the Jews of the truth of Jesus's miraculous power, or of the dignity and importance of his character. For all the people, who knew she was dead, and afterwards faw her alive again, had fufficient evidence from whence to draw the proper confequence; and could have no reason to doubt of his having worked the miracle, The fignal miracle of raifing Lazarus, after he had been for fome days dead and buried, was performed before unbelievers and enemies, as well as friends. For though some of the Jews, upon feeing that aftonishing miracle, were induced to believe on him; yet others of them went their ways to the Pharisees at Jerusalem, to inform them of the miracle; upon which they confulted how they might put him to death, John xi. 45, &c. And many more miracles were worked before unbelieving company. Compare Luke vii. 21. with ver. .31, &c. Matt. xi. 5, &c. with ver. 20, &c. See alfo Luke x. 13, &c. And, when the man, who had been

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been blind and dumb, was perfectly, and in one PARTIII. moment, cured before great multitudes, the Pharifees could not deny the miracle; but they were fuch unbelieving and malicious enemies, as to ascribe it to a confederacy with Beelzebub, the prince of demons, rather than acknowlege that Jesus had performed it by the Spirit of God. The same sort of unbelieving company made the like objection to another of our Lord's miracles, Matt. ix. 32, &c. Again; Jesus cured some few diseased persons, before the unbelieving company at Nazareth, Matt. xiii. 58. Mark vi. 5, 6. And there have been plain reasons assigned, why he did not do more mighty works in that place, and before that people.—The 5000, whom Jesus miraculously fed in the wildernesse at one time, and the 4000 at another time, were too many to have been trusted with a fecret, suppose they had been all of them his friends. But it plainly appears, that some of them were unbelieving company, who followed him for the loaves; and went back, when they found themselves detected, and their design frustrated, John vi. 26; 66. The epileptic boy was cured by Jesus, before his confant enemies, the Scribes, Mark ix. 14, &c. And what full evidence the unbelieving Jews had of Jefus's curing a man, who had been borne blind, appears abundantly, John ix. 13, &c. Again; he cured a dumb man before unbelieving company, Luke xi. 14, 15. He likewise, cured a woman in the lynagogue, before his enemies, Luke xiii. 10, &c. And when some of his most constant adversaries, the Pharisees, threatened him with Herod's killing him, if he did not depart speedily out of his dominions,—he declared, he would work cures that day and the next, and that the third day he should have finished his present design in that place; but Herod could not kill him, for he was to be put to death at Jerusalem, Luke xiii, 31, &c. Cc 2 Again;

196 PARTIII. Again; he cured a man that had the dropfy on the fabbath-day, tho' he knew his enemies were like fpies upon him, and were then watching him, Luke xiv. 1, &c. There were great multitudes present, when Jesus healed Bartimeus, and the other blind man, near Jeriche, Matt. xx. 29, &c. Mark x. 46, &c. The Chief-priefts and Scribes, the grand oppofers of Jesus, saw him cure the blind and the lame in one of the courts of the temple, Matt. xxi, 14, &c. And finally, the ear of Malchus was miraculously cured in the midst of that unbelieving company, which was fent to apprehend Jesus, in order to put him to death. For, in that case, Jesus was obliged to beg it as a favor, of those that had apprehended him, that they would have patience, and let him tarry 'till he had worked that miracle, John xviii. 12, &c. Luke xxii. 50, &c .-Behold here again, Pyrrho, the modesty and exactnesse of your author! It would not (I suppose) have answered his end, to say, that Jesus was sometimes upon the referve. For every candid reader would easily have observed, there might be cases, where referve might be prudent and highly proper. It must therefore be [always, and remarkably upon the referve; and whenever he happened among unbelieving company. ]-I appeal to your own conscience whether, from the few short hints I have given you, it appears plain to you, that Jesus was so particularly sparing of these supposed arguments among (unbelievers) the very persons, who seemed most to want them; and whether he took particular care to prevent their ever coming to public notice. A man may forge history, or pretend to have some other history; but let no man henceforth dare to fay that he can gather any fuch thing from the four gospels. Pyrrhe

who, in his general character, was a man of strict

virtue, began to diflike his author, when he found

that he made use of such unfair methods to support t

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port his cause; and was so far ashamed of him as PARTIII. to make no reply.-But proceded to the remaining part of the objection, p. 48. " My author " (faid he) is speaking of the conduct of Jesus. " when he worked his miracles, and fais, that he " was so far from retaining the grateful patients as witnesses, to communicate what they had experienced, " that their mouths were by special command shut fast " from the liberty of proclaiming the benefits they had " received, and the strictest silence injoined with regard " to the author. See thou tell no man, was gene-" rally the charge. So far from laying hold on any " miraculous occasion that offered, for matter of proof; " that, when the expelled spirits were officious, of their " own accord, and contrary to their own interest, to pro-" claim who he was, the discovery was by no means " permitted at their hands; but their tongues immedi-" ately restrained, and an act of omnipotence exerted to " oblige them them to silence." - Theophilus answered, your author's stile is not so strong in this part of the objection, as in the former. See thou tell no man, is now represented as generally the charge; -not always and constantly, as before. But even this word [generally] is by far too ftrong, and contrary to fact. For, among the numerous miracles of Jesus, I have found only the following instances, (ift.) That of the leprous man, whom our Lord The 46th cured, and then faid unto him, " See thou tell no text, viz. "man; but go thy way, show thyself to the 4. or Mark priest, and offer the gift, which Moses hath i. 44. or "commanded, for a testimony unto them." Luke v. The man 14. See p. The miracle was worked in Galilee. was to travel from thence to Jerusalem.—There he 48. was to go through the rites and ceremonies; which were appointed in the law, for the cleanfing of a leper, Lev. xiv. 1, &c. After he had gone through all those ceremonies, he was to get the priest to pronounce him clean, or perfectly cured; and

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PARTIII. and then was to conceal the miracle no longer, but declare it publicly, for a testimony unto them, or as a proof of Jesus's miraculous power.-From hence it appears, what a strict regard Jesus had to the law; what a prudent method he took to get the priests to pronounce the man perfectly cured. before they were to know how he obtained his cure; otherwise they might not so readily have pronounced him clean; and (what is here more especially to be remarked) we may observe what a wife method our Lord took to avoid the bad confequences of publishing the miracle, immediately and upon the fpot; -for, if the man had done as Jesus commanded him, the going to Jerufalem, performing the ceremonies of cleanling the leper, and returning to Galilee, would have taken up almost a fortnight. And, before that time had been expired, it is probable Jesus would have finished his present work in that place, and would not have been forced to retire sooner, as he was, Jesus did not absolutely forbid the man to publish the miracle; but ordered him to conceal it, only 'till the priest had pronounced him clean. However, the man did not mind Jesus's order; but published it immediately, in the most open manner, and in the neighborhood; so that Jesus could not go openly into the city, but remained for some time without, in desert places, lest too great a concourse should follow him, and excite the jealoufy of the civil magistrate, Mark i. 45. Luke v. 16 .- (2d.) Another instance is recorded, Mark iii. 11, 12. where it is faid that unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him and cried, faying, Thou art the Son of God. And he strictly charged them that they should not make him manifest. If they were madmen, as Dr. Sykes hath, in a very learned and ingenious manner, attempted to prove; their testimony was wisely rejected. For the testimony of madmen could

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could have added nothing to the character of PARTIII. Jesus. Or, if we suppose they were impure or wicked spirits, it is not likely that, of their own accord, and in opposition to their own interest, they should proclaim his divine character to the world. could not be supposed to do it, out of any goodwill to Jesus, or any defire to promote his kingdom.—It was, therefore, highly wife and proper in him to reject their testimony, that he might take away all grounds for that fenfeleffe accusation, which they brought against him, viz. that be cast out demons, by a confederacy with the prince of demons. St. Matthew doth much more justly ascribe such a behavior to the great modesty of Jesus, Matt. xii. 16, &c. A (3d.) instance of his forbiding persons to publish a miracle, was in the case of the resurrection of Jairus's daughter. But who was it, that Jesus forbade to speak of it? None but the parents of the damsel, Luke viii. 56. The peculiar reason of which feems to have been this, (a)—Jairus and (a) See his wife were persons of some distinction, who Mr. Lardwould have been exposed to great envy and ill-dication. will, if they had been obliged to have spread the &c. p. 67. fame of that mighty work. Out of tendernesse, therefore, to their characters, and that he might not needlessly expose them to any difficulties, after he had shown them so much favor, he dispensed with the parents speaking of it. But he did not offer to forbid the great multitude to speak of it; and yet they, all of them, knew of the death of the young woman, and would foon know that she was alive again. Neither did he charge the Apoftles, Peter, James and John, who had feen him perform the miracle, not to publish it. For, as Apostles, it was part of their businesse to publish the proofs and evidences of their Master's mission and doctrine. Was there therefore, in this case, any thing like a follicitude to stiffle every the least report, or shuting

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PARTIII. ing fast every mouth from proclaiming the miracle? Or, injoining the striffest filence, with regard to the author of it? Or, the taking a particular care to prevent its ever coming to public notice? I would leave the man to the reproach of his own conscience, who would infinuate that the gospel-history contains any fuch thing.—As to the three following instances, viz. the privately curing the two blind men, and charging them to tell no man, Matt. ix. 26, &c. The privately curing the man that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, and charging him and his friends not to speak of it, Mark. vii. 32, &c. And the privately curing the blind man, and ordering him to go home to his own house, and not to go into the town, nor tell any person there of the miracle, Mark viii, 22, &c .- These things were all done to prevent too great crouds. And, as they none of them regarded his injunctions, but immediately blazed abroad the miracles, the consequences were, that his enemies were the more exasperated, and the concourse of people, that followed him, became so very great and frequent, that he was obliged, in a little time, in point of prudence, to leave the places, where those miracles had been performed. For, if there had happened any tumults among the vast numbers that followed him, the Roman powers would have taken umbrage; though Jesus disapproved of fuch tumults. And, when they would have taken him and made him a king, he bravely refused the offer.—As to the reasons of Fesus's not declaring, in plain terms, that he was the Meffiab; and his being fo referved and cautious, upon many occasions, Mr. Locke has so well accounted for that part of his conduct, in his excellent treatife of the Reasonablenesse of the Christian Religion, &c. that, if your author had carefully perused that book, he would not have needed to have produced feveral

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of his objections .- As to our Lord's ordering the PARTIII. three Apostles, not to speak of his transfiguration, it was only temporary, i. e. 'till the Son of Man was rifen from the dead; when that and the other additional evidences would make it more credible; and his being gone from this world would take away all grounds for suspecting that he defigned a temporal kingdom, to the prejudice of the civil government then in being.—That prohibition, therefore, could not be defigned to prevent its ever coming to public notice. He did not injoin such strict silence, as always to stifle every the least report. For he, in effect, injoined them to publish it after his refurrection.—I am really tired with confuting the rash and groundlesse affertions of your author, upon this head. I have produced about fifty places, out of the four gospels, where you have a diffinct account of different miracles. And in about forty of these instances there was no fuch charge, as not to publish the miracle. Would any man, therefore, who values his reputation as an author, fay, [See thou tell no man,] was generally the charge; when it most evidently was generally otherwise? Or, that Jesus had any design to prevent the miracles ever coming to public notice; when he worked innumerable miracles in the most public and open manner, and before great multitudes, who flocked out to him from every quarter? Was this any thing like the being follicitous to stifle every the least report?—Surely, a cause that stands in need of such affertions, and wants fuch methods to support it, cannot stand long; but must come to a speedy desolation. Pyrrho faid, he was now to procede to difficulties of a different kind. Upon which Crito defired that they might be the fubject of the next conversation. I have and we diver, has the their elevision in a victoria training

## the objections -As to our Lord's and the Passill. DIALOGUE IV.

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C. William College State of the College State of th PARTIII. DYRRHO began this evening's conversation with

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faying, " If the Christian Faith was to be grounded on argument, then he would inquire, out of his author, p. 65. How this could be confiftent with the se sudden conversion of so many, upon little or no seeming evidence? Or, bow could fuch a thing be expetted, or accepted, at their bands? For instance, Jesus said unto Matthew, follow me; and immediately be left all and followed bim. Was not that precipitately deserting a beneficial imployment, for be knew not se whom or what?"-Theophilus faid that, as to the Apostles, they were evidently some of them difcopies of John Baptift; and it is not improbable but that they were all fo. Now John instructed his disciples as to Jefus's being the promised and long expected Meffiah, John i. 40, &c. Some have taken Manbew for one of the kinsmen of Jesus; because he is called the son of Alpheus, or Cleophas, Mark ii. 14. And one of that name had married Mary, fifter to the virgin Mary, who had by her four fons, that are often called the brethren, or kinfmen of our Lord. Mathew's being a publicane is no objection to his being the disciple of John Baptist; for publicanes came to thim, and were baptized of him, Lake iii. 12. Mat. xxi, 32. The publicanes in Judea were generally Jews; and it was politic in the Romans to put that imployment into the hands of the natives of the country, where the taxes were levied, to throw the odium off from themselves. Now these things will help us to account for what is faid, John 1. 43, &c. The day following Jesus had a mind to go into Galilee, and be found Philip, and faith unto him follow me. With which call Philip complied immediately, and likewise told Nathanael, they DIVECOR

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they had found the Messiah, of whom Moses PARTIIL and the fucceding prophets had wrote; and that Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, was the very person. The case was this, John Baptill had prophesied of his coming, and baptized multitudes, to prepare them for entering into the Melhab's kingdom; which he declared, was just at hand. He had likewise baptized Fesus as the Melliab, or the great prophet, by whom that kingdom was to be erected, and to whom it was to be in subjection. After baptism, Jesus also began to preach that men should repent, because the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The office of John Baptist was to be as an harbinger, or foreruner, to the great king, the Messah. He was not that light himself; but he came for a witnesse, that all men through him should believe on Jesus as the Christ. And accordingly, John bore witnesse, and cried saying, "This was he, of whom I spake. He that cometh after me, is prefered before me; for he was my prince, my superior or Lord." And when the Jewish Sanbedrim sent a solemn deputation of Priests and Levites from Jerusalem, to inquire of John Baptist, whether he was the Christ? He openly declared, he was not; but baptized with water, to prepare men for the approach of the Messiab, who would himself shortly appear, and baptize men with the Holy Spirit and with fire; who would destroy the wicked, but reward the righteous, and make them happy .-Again; the next day John saw Jesus coming unto him; and then he publicly declared, that that was the Lamb of God, who taketh away the fin of the world:intimating that it was the very person, of whom he had spoken the day before. And, as a confirmation of it, John said, he had seen the Spirit come down from heaven, and remaining for some time upon him; which was the token God had re-Dd 2 veled

PARTIII. veled to him, whereby to know the Meffiab, or rather to be confirmed in the knowlege of him. -AGAIN; The next day John stood and two of his disciples with him. And seeing Jesus walking by, he pointed to him and faid (as before) Behold the Lamb of God! Upon that, these two disciples followed Jesus to the place of his stated habitation, and tarried the whole day, to converse with him, and to inquire into the evidences of his being the Meffiab. And, when they had inquired, they were fatisfied themselves. and informed others. - Now, if we consider all these things, and remember how universally John Baptist was looked upon as a prophet; and that Philip, as well as many others, were prepared for the reception of Jesus as the Messiab, by having had him pointed out to them for fuch; there is nothing fo very wonderful, nor any thing unreasonable in his presently complying with that call, to follow Jefus, or to become his disciple. When Nathanael faid, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip talked like a truly rational believer, and faid, Come and see; i. e. " Do not condemn a man and his doctrine, without proper inquiry and examination." This, furely, was an appeal to Nathanael's understanding, and a plain intimation that Philip thought there was sufficient evidence.—After this Jesus turned water into wine, publicly at a marriage feaft, in Cana of Galilee. And, when he had thus manifested his glory, his disciples believed on him, or were confirmed in their Faith in him. Then he went up to Jerusalem, to celebrate the passover; and there he drove the buyers and fellers out of the temple, and worked other miracles, whereby he increased the number of his disciples. Having, by these things, raised the envy of the Pharifees, he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee,

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Galilee, and the way thither laid through Samaria, PARTIII-There he manifested his extraordinary knowlege, by laying open the fecret wickednesse of a woman of bad fame, in such a clear and convincing manner, as to fatisfie her that he was a prophet; and by further evidence the believed him to be the Chrift, as he acknowleded he was. Upon that, the woman went into the town of Sichar, and told her neighbors, " fhe had met with a stranger, who had laid before her some of the most secret and remarkable passages of her life; which none could have done but some eminent prophet." And she told the story with so many and such furprizing circumstances, that many of that city believed on him, for the saying of the woman, who testified, be told me all that ever I did. Concerning The 47th this passage your author sais, A notable foundation, text, John truly, for confidence and conviction, and perhaps mar- iv. 39. tyrdom, &c. And afterwards calls this light intel- See p. 66. ligence. Whereas, if it be confidered that the Samaritanes had among them the writings of the Old Testament; and that they expected the Messiah, as well as the Jews; that it was generally thought that was the time for his coming; that discovering secrets was one signal proof of a man's being a prophet; and that in that case they had no reason to disbelieve the woman, nor teject any just evidence,—the thing has nothing fo very wonderful or ridiculous in it. However, they were none of them called to be martyrs upon that evidence alone; neither was that all the evidence afforded them. For, upon Jesus's tarrying two days among them, many more believed because of his own word; and they said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy faying only; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world. After that again, Philip the Evangelist

PARTHI. went down to Samaria, most probably to the town of Sichar; and there he preached Christ; and worked miracles. And finally, two of the most eminent Apo-Ales of the circumcifion, Peter and John went thither. and confered upon the Christians, in that place, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. So that they had fufficient foundation for a thorough conviction, and even for martyrdom; tho' we read nothing of their being, any of them, called to that great and diftinguishing trial.-After leaving Samaria, Jesus went about Galilee, and taught in their synagogues with great acceptance. And, among other things, he being at Cana, cured the nobleman's fon at Capernaum. He likewise cured a demoniac, or epileptic person; and Peter's wife's mother, who kept her bed with a fever; and a multitude of other diseased persons. And, finally, he (by his miraculous power) affifted Simon Peter and Andrew his brother, together with James and John, to catch a large draught of fishes. After all these things, Fesus walked along the shore of the sea of Galilee, and faid unto these four fishermen, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men, i. e. You shall, in due time, become my Apostles, and catch men in the net of the gospel, or convert them from ignorance and vice, to truth and holinesse.-It is evident, from the four gospels, that these words [Follow me,] do not here signifie, as before, Become my disciples. Neither was this a fudden conversion, nor any converfion at all. For they were, long before this, first the disciples of John Baptist, and then of Jesus. And having been disciples for some time, they were now called to be more constant attendants upon Fesus, that they might by him be trained up for the Apostolic office. And what they had already heard and feen, had that good effect upon them, as to dispose them readily to comply with this call .-Again; after that Jesus travelled about from place

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to place, and worked a great many more miracles. PARTIII. And then, passing along the shore, he saw Matthew fiting at the place where the Roman custom was collected, and Jesus called him also, to follow him. The 4816 And be immediately left all and followed bime We text, Mat. have no reason to think this was a sudden conversion, ix. 9. or any convertion at all; any more than the for- See p. 65. mer. For there is no ground for supposing that Matthew now first became a disciple of Jesus The more probable account is, that he had been the disciple of John Baptist, and after that of Fesus, like the other persons above-mentioned. And what he had seen and heard, induced him to forfake his imployment, and to attend upon the person of Febra that he might be trained up for the Apostolic office. It is true, he left a beneficial imployment; but it was not to follow a stranger, he knew not whither or wherefore. He had fufficient reason for what he did. And the more he denied himself for the public good, it was fo much the more to his honor: He deserved greater esteem and gratitude from men, and will at last have a greater reward from God. It was not a word speaking, a precipitate action, or a fudden offer, that led him to fuch la conduct. But the attestation of antient prophesies; the testimony of John Baptist, whom all men accounted a prophet; and the exemplary behavior, the rational doctrine and repeted miracles of Jefus; which was more than a little, or mere feeming evidence, nay, even a very rational ground of conduct, and becoming the most wife and virtuous man, 18919 of

Pyrrho said, his author had furnished him with some other queries to the same purpose, viz. "Why were persons so severely reproved for the sin of insidelity, or commended for believing, when there was great reason to doubt, and even disbelieve?" Theophilus observed that there were sour cases refered to, which he would consider, one by

one.

PARTIII. one. (1.) Zacharias's being struck dumb on the spot,

The 49th country besitating upon what carried, according to the text, Luke common course of nature, the bighest face of impossibility. in 11, &c -The feriptural account is this, when Zacharias. explained. who was a Jewish Priest, was standing in the first See p. 79 room in the temple, by the altar of incense; and. according to his order and office, making the proper oblation there, an angel of the Lord appeared anto him. And, when the glorious appearance fruck him with reverence and terror, the angel fooke unto him, to the following purpole, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a fon (though you are both of you advanced in years) and you shall call his name Yohn. He shall cause great joy to many; because he shall, as his fore-runer, prepare the people for the great Lord, the Meffab."\_ There are no degrees of impossibility; but whatever face of impossibility, this might, at first view, carry, according to the common course of nature, Zacharias must needs know that the power of God was able to effect this, as well as to create man at first, or to continue upon earth the fuccession of generations, according to the usual course of nature. He had no reason to doubt of the message's being delivered by an angel; and he knew that that was the time when the Meffich was daily expected, Your author, Purbo, must needs blame Zacharias for hefitating. For, (as I have observed above, p. 162.) he hath represented the authority of an angel from heaven fo great, as to intimate, that there is nothing in the nimost of reason's assurances to falsify or confront such a preacher; nor is there any thing, that the nature of any external evidence can possibly afford us, that bath not more than a ballance in fuch an authority. See p. 11. As, therefore, your author allows, that neither the utmost affurances of reason, nor any external evidence, could have been of greater authority than the appearance 9710

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pearance of an angel from heaven, he ought to PARTIII. have blamed Zacharias for besitating. For, of the power of God to effect this, Zacharias could not doubt or helitate one moment.—However, as Zacharias did hefitate (not as thinking it impossible. but highly improbable; because he himself was old, and his wife beyond the usual age for having children) he wanted fome fign, or miracle, as a present proof of the truth of the prediction. angel thought that Zacharias could have no doubt of God's being able to do fuch a thing; and that he himself might have been credited; and therefore he gave him such a sign, as should be both a gentle punishment for his besitation, and a token that the promise should in due time be made good, And that was that, from that time to the birth of the child, Zacharias should be dumb and unable to speak one word. But afterwards, to his great joy, he received both a fon and his speech again,—Now, what great abfurdity can your author find here? If he had been confistent with himself, he would have acknowleged that the authority of an angel was greater than any external evidence, or even the utmost assurances of reason; and, therefore, he ought to have condemned Zacharias for doubting. But he rather vindicates him, and fais and unfais, just as will best answer his own purpose; and evidence shall be great or small, or none at all, according as he is pleased to determine. - Then Pyrrho said, "Theophilus, let us procede to the (2d.) instance, which my author expresses thus, With what severity The soth does our Lord reprove the sin of infidelity in his disciples, text, Mat. for imagining they were going to be drowned, when viii. 23, their vessel was actually sinking under them; and it had iv. 36,8%. been, from all appearance, a fin against common sense, Luke viii. to bave thought otherwise?" Theophilus answered, that 22, &c. according to the harmony of the four gospels, there See p. 79. are above twenty places, where Jesus is said to have E e worked

PARTIII. worked miracles before this; and, therefore, the

disciples, who had been eye-witnesses of most of those miracles, had just reason to think that he was able to deliver them in the greatest danger; and, that they, especially in his presence, were under the peculiar inspection and care of God, who would not fuffer fo great a prophet, or his disciples, that were to erect the kingdom of righteoufnesse among men, to perish in the water, before they had accomplished their work.—The infidelity, for which Jesus reproved them, when he said [Wby are you so fearful, O ye of little Faith?] was not their difbelief of the gospel, but of Jesus's power to preserve them at that time; after he had worked fo many miracles before their eyes. For, after fuch repeted and incontestible proofs, it would have been a fin against common sense, to have continued doubting, or to have behaved otherwise than Jesus expected and required .- Pyrrho went on to the third instance, and inquired, "Why did Jesus say to the two poor, deluded travellers, [O fools, and flow to believe!] when text, Luke they had no reason to believe?"-Theophilus replied, That on that very day, on which Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared unto several of his disciples. But, as the very apprehension of seeing a dead person come to life again, is apt to create an horror, suppole he was to appear in the day-time, and with circumstances of the greatest familiarity, Jesus did not discover himself all at once, for fear of surprizing them, and making them fall into a fainting fit, instead of being able to attend to the proofs and evidences of his being rifen again. Among other of his gradual appearances, this was one; there were two disciples of his going to Emmaus, a village about seven miles from Jerusalem. And, as they were walking along the road, they were talking about Jesus's having worked miracles, and his having given other proofs of being a prophet, mighty

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in word and deed; that he had been put to death PARTIII. at Terusalem; that they had had great and raised expectations from him; and that a report had been foread about, that morning, of his being rifen again from the dead ;-which report they had received from persons of credit among their own acquaintance, and yet they feemed to doubt the truth of it. - Jesus, (I say) that he might discover himself gradually to them, took on him the form of a stranger and traveller, and having joined company with them, he defired to know why they looked to anxious, and about what they converted so earnestly? They readily told him. And, upon observing that they hesitated, notwithstanding he had fo often worked miracles before their eyes, and fo frequently foretold his own death and his refurrection on the third day; and, tho' they now had also credible testimony of the fact, to confirm the truth of those predictions; he very justly faid unto them, O unwife and flow of heart to believe! Your author would infinuate that they were only involved in the national misapprebension, with regard to the nature of their promised deliverance; that they expected a triumphant standard-bearer and a temporal prince for their Meffiab; that their mistake was natural and quite innocent, and therefore they deferved no fuch rebuke; that it was merely a want of understanding; and that it is not to be believed that God would reproach any of his creatures with a defective intellect, when he was pleased to give them no better. But all this is quite besides the purpose. For it was not for want of understanding, but of attention, and a proper candor of mind, that they were blamed. It is true, the nation expected a temporal prince for their Meffiab; but it is also true that their prophets had prophefied of a spiritual and luffering Messiah; of one that should be a light to inlighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of Israel; Ee 2 that

PART III that in bis days, the earth should be full of the knowlege of the Lord, as the waters cover the channels of the sea: that by his knowlege be was to justifie many; that he was to be a man of forrows and acquainted with grief; that Messiab the prince was to be cut off, tho' not for bimself; that he was to avenge, or repay, his grave upon the wicked, and upon the rich his death; that he was to make an end of fin, make reconciliation for iniquity, and introduce everlasting righteousnesse. Now, were not all these plain predictions of a spiritual, suffering Mesfiah? Nor did Jesus blame them, merely for not understanding these prophesies. For they had had, according to their own confession, clear evidences of his being a prophet mighty in word and deed, before God, and all the people; of his having been taken for the Meshab by many, and his proving it to them that he was really such. As Jesus had likewise foretold his own death and refurrection, and their acquaintance had that day testified that it was actually come to passe, and that he had appeared to them, fince his refurrection, all these things rendered their disbelief quite unreasonable and criminal. It was not, therefore, a groundleffe reproach, or unjust censure, to say unto them, O men without understanding and slow of beart to believe! -And, to give them further fatisfaction, Jesus shewed them how agreeable these things were to the antient prophelies of Moses and the succeding prophets, who had foretold the coming of the Meffiab, his being put to death, and yet his having an everlasting kingdom; which he could not have had without rifing again.—Finally, he took on him his common form, spoke in his usual voice, and discovered himself to be that very Jesus, who three days ago had been crucified, but was now come to life again; and by all thefe things they were confirmed in their Faith in his refurrection. This was by n means imposing upon two poor travellers; nor reproving

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proving them, without just reason for their want Part IIL of Faith; or merely because they did not underfland some of the mysterious prophesies of the Old Testament.—If, on the one hand, they had the determinations of their ablest Doctors and Sanbedrims. and the national expectation of a triumphant standardbearer and a temporal Meshab; On the other hand, they had Fefus who, by his many miracles, proved himself a prophet mighty in word and deed, and who interpreted the prophesies quite another way. And, what might have crowned all, when they came to examine, they would find the prophets themselves had foretold a spiritual and suffering Messiah.-" Pyrrbo observed that the (4th.) instance was of a different kind. For The 52d his author seemed to blame Abraham the father of text, the faithful, not for want of Faith, but for be Rom. iv. lieving too much." Theophilus said, the promise 18. See p. refered to, was concerning Abraham and Sarah's having a fon in their old age; fuch a promise as has been already taken notice of, in the case of Zacharias and Elizabeth. For above twenty years before that, Abraham had conversed with God, who appeared unto him in a visible glory, gave him commands which he obeyed, and made him promises which were all punctually accomplished. After such a train of evidences, he had no reason to doubt that the promise of Isaat came from God, or that Almighty power was able to accomplish it. He therefore (contrary to what could have been hoped for, in the common course of nature, and without an extraordinary promise and miraculous interpolition of God) believed that God would be as good as his word. This, in the Jewish stile, is called, Against bope believing in bope; -which fignifies no more than that, " notwithstanding it was contrary to all human probability, he firmly trusted in the power and veracity of God, having MARTI

PARTIII. fufficient reason to believe that the promise came from God," Here was, therefore, nothing unreasonable in such a Faith. No; the Patriarch reasoned very well, when he concluded that natural impediments could not render the promised event impracticable, as the Almighty power of God was ingaged to bring it to passe.—As to what is said of " Abraham's Faith being, in this particular, proposed for our imitation; "-it is all groundlesse, if thereby we are to understand that we are to believe, fuch a miracle will be repeted, where no fuch promise has been made of God. But we are indeed, so far to imitate Abrabam's Faith, in this and other instances, as to confide in God for the accomplishment of all the promises he has made to us; and to see to it, that our Faith be made manifest by our good works, and be in us a principle of obedience. In this respect, the Patriarch Abraham is proposed to us, as the most laudable pattern for our imitation.

The 53d Pyrrho produced a difficulty of another kind, text, Acts and faid, "Why was Jesus so particularly cautious of xxvi. 26. exposing his person, after his resurrection, to public See p. 68. view; when his taking one turn in the market-place might have spared both the painful labors and

view; when his taking one turn in the marketplace might have spared both the painful labors and lives of so many boly vouchers, who perished merely by the thing's being done in a corner?" Theophilus observed, that this was one instance of the freedom which the author took with the Scriptures. St. Paul sais, that this thing was not done in a corner. He takes upon him to contradict the Apostle, and sais express, that this thing was done in a corner, and points out (as he imagines) some of the bad consequences thereof. But (continued Theophilus) I have said so much concerning the public nature of Christ's death, and the full and abundant attestation of his resurrection; that I need not now to add any thing upon that head. Whoever considers it, will find that there were such open and remark-

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remarkable circumstances of truth and credibility, PARTIII. that there was then most ample evidence; and that we alfo, at this distance, may be firmly and rationally perfuaded of it. Suppose Jesus, as a punishment upon the incredulous and stiff-necked Fews, had refused to make use of any more means to reform and fave them,-after they had rejected his doctrine and miracles, and put him to fo cruel a death; your author would not have been able to prove, that that had been any way abfurd, or unreasonable. For (as I have often had occasion to observe) there is a degree of evidence, beyond which the wisdom of God fees not fit to go, or to allow men any more. And they, who had had the light of nature in common with the rest of mankind, and the Old Testament Revelation over and above: and had likewise been favored with the preaching of John Baptist, and with the preaching and miracles of Jesus, of the twelve, and of the feventy; and yet refused to repent and believe, might have been justly punished with some exemplary punishment. God is strictly justifiable in withdrawing his light from such as choose to sit in darknesse, and absolutely refusing the continuance of all means of conviction to such as, by their ingratitude and neglect, have rendered themselves unworthy of all farther sollicitation; and would, by their infidelity of Spirit, render its operations, if tried, of no effect. However, here was something more of the long-suffering character displayed in their behalf; some more patient degree of attendance (not to a tardy genius and innocent scruples; for they were not the only impediment; but) even to persons of perverse and flubborn minds. For, after abufing all the abovementioned means, and puting the Lord of life and glory to death, they had further means tried upon them, and further evidences afforded them; though in that way in which the wiscom of God faw proper. It is faid concerning Jest's Christ that.

PARTIN that, after he was crucified, Him God raifed up the

The 54th third day, and flowed bim openly; not to all the people; text, Acts but unto witnesses chosen of God, who eat and drank x. 40, 41. with him after his resurredien. Now, suppose the See p. 68. enemies of Christianity should object to those chofen witnesses; let them assign some sufficient reason for their objecting to them. Was it not fit that some persons should be intimate with Fesus before his death, that they might know him again after his refurrection? Could strangers, or persons, who had feen him but feldom, or transfently, know him as well as his own family and most intimate friends? Or, could the testimony of Auch Grangers have been equally valid and credible? Would it not have been faid that they knew fo little of him, as that they might easily take another person who resembled him, for Jesus come to life again? Whereas his familiar friends, who had been chosen to attend upon his person, for some time before he died, could not be fo easily imposed upon. -Well, but your author intimates, that " Jesus might have exposed his person to public view, after his refurrection; and that his taking one turn in the market-place, might have spared the painful labors of those who travelled about, to spread the story of his refurrection, and their losing their lives, upon that account. Or, in other words, that his refurrection would have been more credible unto us, and to the rest of mankind, if Jesus had appeared, not to his disciples only, but as publicly among the Jews after his refurrection, as he had done before."-As to this (faid Theophilus) I would inquire, Would your friends, Pyrrbo, have thought it more credible, if that had been the case? Or would they then, have acknowledged his refurrection, and become his disciples? I am fully perfuaded, they would not. But it is the way of sceptical and cavilling men to overlook the evidence they already have, and to require

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require some which they have not. Let us sup PARTIH. pose that Jesus had appeared publicly among the Yews, and even taken a turn in the market-place at Terusalem, after his refurrection; it is not likely that the body of the Fewish nation would have thereupon become his disciples; because miracles had been worked in abundance, and they had had plenty of evidence, if they had not been bent upon rejecting it. And, if they had rejected him, then it would have been faid, is that the Jews, who (as: you pretend) faw him after his refurrection, fay, they faw no fuch thing; and are therefore counter evidence to the Apostles and other disciples, who have borne testimony to that fact."-Supposing, therefore, that Jesus actually rose again, their unbelief, after they had feen him, would not have strengthened, but (in the opinion of most men) weakened the evidence to us. Let us now make the supposition of Jesus's appearing publicly to them, after his refurrection, and that the Jews at Jerusalem, or the whole nation, had thereupon, in general, become his disciples; what evidence could the rest of the world have had, but testimony only? (a) If the Sanbedrim had travelled about, (a) See published it in the nations, wrought miracles in his the miraname, and laid down their lives in confirmation of cles of Jethe truth of that fact; they would then have done dicated, no more than the Apostles actually did. Or, if Part I. the Apostles, or any other Jews, had set out for p. 11. foreign countries, and grounded Christianity upon this fact of Christ's resurrection; and, as a proof of it, had infifted upon it, that not only they themfelves, but the Chief-priefts, Elders and Scribes had feen him; that be bad taken a turn in the marketplace; that Jerusalem, and the whole nation, were fully perfuaded of the truth of it; and had produced certificates for that purpose; under the hands and feal of the great council, or Sanbedrim;-

PARTIII. " Would not your friends, Pyrrho, have made more and stronger objections to the united testimony of the Tewifo nation? Would they not have found more room to suspect an imposture than they can now? Would they not have called it a flate trick, a Fewish fable, a mere political contrivance, to patch up their broken credit, after they had fo long talked of a Meffiab that was to come about that time; that they devised this story to palliate the matter, when they found they were disappointed of their grand expectation? And, as the chief men of the nation were in the plot, a fraud might be eafily carried on; and that either the people, in general, fell in with it, or fuch as were more curious and inquisitive were intimidated by their superiors, and discouraged from making too close a scrutiny." Upon that supposition, therefore, there would have been a greater objection against it than there is at present. And, allowing that Jesus actually rose again, there could not have been a wifer and more effectual method devifed to make this evident unto persons of all ages and nations. Your author fais, p. 52, &c. that whenever miracles cease, the authority of the evidence which depended on them, ceases with them; that a miracle, which was ocular proof to its co-temporaries, to us is no more than uncertain bear-fay. And afterwards intimates again, that it was impossible in nature to have given such kind of evidence as could be transfered, &cc. They that faw might believe, but he fais, be is not obliged to believe any thing, because another sais be saw it, &cc. The light of conviction, therefore, which is thus received, can extend no farther, than to the eye-witnesse bimself, being lost and extinguished the first moment it is offered to be imparted.—He, therefore, evidently contradicts himfelf, when he affirms, that Jefus's taking one turn in the market-place might have spared both the painful labors and lives of so many boly vouchers, who perished, merely by the

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the thing's being done in a corner. I have already PARTIII. shewn that Jesus died in the most public manner; that he came to life again the third day; notwithfranding the precautions of his enemies to prevent his refurrection; that he gave the Apostles and fome bundreds of other disciples, as much proof of his refurrection as they defired, as the thing was capable of, or as the most serupulous person could have wished for, if he had been one of them; that by the plenteous effusion of the Spirit, which followed foon after, and by which the Apostles were inspired, and not only inabled to work miracles themselves, in the name of Jesus, but even to communicate spiritual gifts or miraculous powers to their converts ; by thefe, I fay, they carried every where along with them the strongest attestations to their testimony and mission. If the Jews must have been all fatisfied by ocular demonstration, why not the Gentiles also? And, if persons in that age had a right to demand fuch evidence, why may not perfons of every age and country as reasonably insist upon it. or expect it? And then Jefus Christ must have remainedalways upon earth, and have gone about continually to show himself alive after his resurrection. And, in that cafe, how could the greatest part of mankind have been affured of his death? Testimony would have been all they could have had to trust to. And we have now abundant testimony both to his death and refurrection. What wild schemes, therefore, do these men propose? and how much preferable is the method that was taken?—When we have fufficient evidence in any one way, we ought to attend to it. But turn this affair which way you will, the method taken appears to be the wifeft that could have been contrived, to spread this grand fact of Christ's resurrection.—Thus ended their conversation with respect to the texts which concerned the character and behavior of Jejus.

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## DIALOGUE V.

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PARTIII. ORITO put them in mind that, according to their proposed method, they were now to confider the texts, which related to the conduct of the Apostles. Upon which Pyrrbe said, " My author. p. 38, &c. argues thus, viz. that reason and argument cannot be supposed to be the way to bring men over to the Christian Faith; because the Apostles neither did argue, nor could argue. And, if they had argued and reasoned with mankind, they could not have thet with any successe." Theophilus oberved that this way of talking was all fophistry, and quite foreign to the purpose for which it was alleged. It is acknowleged (fais he) that the Apolles were, most of them, no proficients in any fcience. They could (I suppose) read the Scriptures in their own language, but were otherwise no more than plain illiterate men, chosen for that purpose, that the excellence of the power, and their amazing fuccesse, might appear to be not of men, but of God. Or, as your author has expressed it, that we might not possibly be tempted to attribute to reason's force, or impute to any personal all or acquisition of their own, an effect which was to be the fole and immediate act of the divinity; and wherein the power of God was in a particular manner to be glorified. For the same reason St. Paul renounced all his human learning, from the 2. 1 Cor i. first moment of his commencing Apostle, and determined 17. See p. to know nothing elfe, among his disciples, but Christ crucified, The relied on revelation and miracles as the proper proofs to be made use of, by an Apostle:] And he would not make use of the wisdom of words, lest the crosse of Christ should be made of none effect, i.e. he chose to avoid the rhetorical language of the schools, that it might appear that it was owing to truth and evidence, and not to his eloquence, that

The 55th and 56th texts,

he had fuch fuccesse. Notwithstanding that Afring, PARTILL inquisitive bumor of the Greeks, which your author has here taken notice of, it is far from being true, that nothing would passe with them but the strictest reasoning. For they, in numberleffe cases, and especially in matters of religion, reasoned very ill. I would fain know upon what strict reasoning their idolatry was built : or those obscene and abominable rites, which were practifedin the worship of several of their Gods. Or, let him and all his brethren combined produce a fiftem of morals, equal to that of the New Teftament, collected from any one of those inquisitive and fifting Greeks ; notwithstanding nothing would passe with them but the strictest reasoning. If they had, in general, imbraced the Christian religion, perhaps some men would have found that they reasoned the worst of all the men that ever lived, and that they dealt most in the colorings of the rhetoricians, and in the fophistry of the schools, without a proper care to diffinguish between right and wrong. But, as most of them rejected the gospel, it is sufficient to recommend them as very acute men, who carefully fifted and thoroughly examined every thing, and would let nothing passe but the strictest reasoning. It is freely acknowleged (and let him make the most of it) that few or none of our Lord's Apostles had ever studied such a system of moral philosophy, as the introduction to the second volume of Dr. Clarke's Boyle's Lectures, or Mr. Woolafton's Religion of Nature delineated. They did not begin with eternal relations, moral differences of things, and the like; and lay these as the foundation of their intended superstructure. But what then? They notwithstanding proved their point, and reasoned and argued very justly. They have not contradicted any true morals, though they took quite another method to prove the truth of Christianity. They did, indeed, make their appeals to mens understandings

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Paarlii ings and reasonable faculties; but in a different way from any modern apologifts, being indued with readier and more decilive means of conviction more futable to the Apostolic character, to the bulk of mankind, and to their own necessary course of dispatch. They grounded Christianity upon facts; they worked miracles before the faces of their hearers, in proof of their divine mission; and they confered upon their converts miraculous powers. These were immediate appeals to mens fenfes; what the lowest of the people could judge of, and reason be with him, and in an extraordinary manner affift him, God bath fet to his feal, that what fuch men teach is true! He needs not argue from eternal relations and moral differences of things, who can prove by miracles that he is immediately commissioned and fent of God. Not that the Apostles ever attempted to overturn natural religion, or ever spoke against eternal relations, moral differences, and their obligations. No; they supposed the religion of nature to be true; they confirmed every moral obligation; and strengthened by divine authority what the reason and consciences of men had before, in some measure, dictated to be right. I am perfunded, Pyrrbo, that you are fo good a mathematician as to know that the same proposition in Euelid may be demonstrated either by algebra, or in the common method of the geometricians; and that the fame problem may be folved, fometimes, either by arithmetic or algebra. And any man may be fatisfied that there is such a place as Paris or Rome, either by going thither himself, or by the testimony of persons who have been there. In like manner, the same doctrine, or moral precept, may be proved obligatory, either by the authority of an Apostle, or the strong reasoning of a Clarke or a Woolaston; - more especially when the latter are favored

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favored with the writings of the former. And PARTIII. one would indeed wonder that men of letters should talk fo weakly, as to intimate there is any the least contradiction between these things; when it is evident they mutually strengthen and support one another. The Apostles themselves worked miracles; they imparted also unto others the power of working miracles. When these figur of their being Apostles were made manifest, they justly claimed regard; and dictated, like persons who had authority, and came with a mellage from God ; not like those who trace out all their discoveries from their own reasoning, or from the writings of others, whether facred or profane. It was qualification enough, in such a case, for a missionery to be furnished with his manifesto. Their having such spiritual sists and miraculous powers was, in the Apostle's own sense, being inlightened, tasting of the beavenly gift, and being The 57th made partakers of the Holy Ghost. As their credentials text, Heb. were fo clear and bright, they could make great vi. 4. See dispatch, and spread their excellent doctrine with amazing fwiftnesse and successe. In their writings they have with their doctrines and precepts intermixed the clear proofs of their authority. And, in these latter times, when many seek to pervert the right ways of God, there arises such a genius as Dr. Clarke, who, with indefatigable labor and the most strict integrity, makes use of his great learning and acumen, to trace out eternal relations, moral funesses and differences of action; and points out the religion of nature and its obligations; applying all this to the proving or confirming the truth of the Christian religion; and in his excellent apology, shewing that he could lay the foundation deep for such a superstructure. Now here is no manner of inconfistency between the Apostles planting Christianity by miracles, and Dr. Clarke's defending it in this method, in our day and in our circumstances;

PARTIII. any more than there is between Euclid's demonstrating his propositions, at first, in the geometrical way, and any person's afterwards shewing that some of them may be also demonstrated by algebra. The proofs are both good in their kind, both strict. ly conclusive; they do not in the least clash or contradict one another, but mutually strengthen and confirm each other. - The Scripture tells us that, in the days of Noah, there was an univerfal deluge. Naturalists have found, upon examination, that there are beds of the shells of fishes, and likewise plants and the bones of fishes, at a considerable depth in the ground, upon mountains, and at a great distance from the sea and from all rivers. Now does this latter discovery overthrow the Mosaic account of the deluge, or confirm it? - Thus it may appear to every common reader, that though the Apostles did not begin and argue in the same way with some able apologists; yet they reasoned and argued very justly, in a way more extraordinary and striking, more suted to the bulk of mankind, and more becoming the Apostolic character and dignity. Their reasoning was more just and conclusive, and more levelled to common capacities, than the reasonings of your author's inquisitive and fifting Greeks; notwithstanding they were so conceited and vain as to account it foolishnesse. Thus St. Peter argued with the Jews, Ats ii. 14, &c. " that the gift of tongues, and the other miraculous powers then bestowed, were according to some antient predictions of their prophets, and proceded from the power of Jesus of Nazareth, who had himself worked many miracles among them; that same Jesus, whom they had a few weeks before flain; but whom God had raised again from the dead .- Therefore, fais he, all the house of Israel may affuredly know (or reasonably conclude) that God hath made him both Lord and Christ." This reasoning,

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reasoning, surely, was very strong, and pierced to PART III. the heart those who had consented to the death of Jesus. And it had the proper effect; for 3000 were converted that day; Again, their additional preaching and miracles brought in 5000 more, within a short space; not that they were gained The 58th, over (as your author fais) merely by that one bearing, 59th and or convinced by a fingle lecture; but when the evi-texts, Acts dences of Christ's refurrection and the effusion of the ii. 41. Spirit, were added to all the former miracles of Acts iv. 4. Tefus, and the many wonderful works which he had Acts xix. done, the argument was fo strong as to convince 20. See p. numbers that he must be the Christ. So mightily, [and by fuch rational and striking evidences] grew the word of God and prevailed.—Thus the Apostles very wisely continued the same method of practice exactly in their turn, and trode punctually in their master's steps, in the execution of their office; insisting, and that very justly, upon the ready acknowlegement of their doctrine, which was accompanied with such evident demonstration of the Spirit, and of power. - Pyrrbo allowed that Theophilus had fet the matter in a different light, and what feemed more agreeable to the Scriptures. "But how do you account (fais he) for the Apostles moving about so speedily from place to place? Did they give their hearers due time to think and deliberate sufficiently in order to their obtaining a rational, well-grounded and fetled conviction?" Toeophilus said, they did all that was sufficient; and afferted that the author and the AEIs of the Apostles had given a very different account of this matter also. According to the best chronologers, the Apostles and many other Christians indued with spiritual gifts and miraculous powers tarried at Jerusalem about a year after Christ's refurrection. Now, consider that the ministry of John Baptist had been in Judea; that all the Jews accounted him a prophet; and that he declared Jefus to be the Christ: That Gg there

PARTIII. there Jesus himself had preached and worked miracles; that he had fent out the twelve and the feventy, and that they had also, in his name, preached and worked miracles; and all this before his death. Moreover, he had been crucified at Jerusalem; arose again the third day; and appeared for forty days unto many, who had been well acquainted with him before his crucifixion. There the Holy Spirit had been poured out, and miracles worked in his name, in great numbers after his death, and as a confirmation of his refurrection.—Confider all these things (I say) and take them into the account, as one in truth and justice ought to do; and then the effect will not be above what fuch a cause might be reasonably thought to produce; - notwithstanding their doctrine spread with aftonishing swiftnesse and presently filled Jerufalem; though fiercely opposed by the leading men in that city.—Whatever doubts or difficulties might arise in the minds of their converts, either as to the Christian doctrine or its evidences, they had so long the twelve Apostles, as so many oracles to apply to, and by them could be fatisfied immediately. The tidings of fuch things would naturally awaken mens curiofity, and from the city spread, in a little time, into the furrounding country of Judea. The persecution of the Christians, which happened about the time of St. Stephen's martyrdom, would of course disperse the Christians and increase the spread of the gospel. From Judea it proceded to Samaria. And whoever confiders that the Samaritanes were generally of the Jewish race; that they were well acquainted with the books of the Old Testament; and that our Savior had lately been among them in person,-will not wonder at that step, which was the most gradual and natural. Among the Samaritanes miracles were worked by Philip; and afterwards two of the Apostles went down to them from Jerusalem;

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Jerusalem; and, by the laying on of their hands, PARTIII. confered upon the converts there, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. In this way it is quite rational to think that they would make much greater difpatch, than it was possible to have done without the power of working fo many and fuch great miracles.—Your author, who feldom, or never takes in all the circumstances, calls the " Ethiopian eunuch The 61st the proselyte of a short stage, instructed one bour and text, Acts baptized the next :- And intimates that that was fuf- &c. See ficient proof that there was no time to stand and p. 39. deliberate, to make a proper inquiry or examination; or that it was impossible he should be rationally convinced of the truth of that religion which he so suddenly imbraced." But, if he had considered that the eunuch was a proselyte of righteousnesse to the Jewish religion, and well acquainted with the Old Testament prophets; that he was then reading the livid chapter of Isaiah, which is a literal prophely of Christ, and was fully accomplished in Jesus of Nazareth; that Philip could asfure him, he was directed by an impulse of the Spirit, to go and attend upon him; that Philip would, most naturally, be led to give him an account of the life and actions, death and refurrection of Jesus; and likewise of the late plenteous effusion of the Spirit, and what the Apostles and others had fince done in Jerusalem and other places; that the eunuch was now coming from Jerusalem, where he (most probably) had heard a great deal about Jesus and his disciples; put all these things together (I fay) and all the Faith, that was necessary before Christian baptism, might be rational and well-grounded. It is not to be supposed that Philip could go over all the articles of the Christian Faith in that one conference. The eunuch already believed in the one true God, expected a refurrection from the dead, and a righteous judgment Gg 2

PARTIII. to come. It was therefore sufficient, if Philip convinced him that Jefus was the Christ; that he profeffed his belief of that fundamental article, and became the disciple of Jesus by baptism .- Some men are better disposed for the reception of truth than others. Some have that acutenesse of mind. as to be able both to understand and demonstrate a proposition in Euclid, in lesse time than another must take barely to understand it. You may teach fome men more in half a day, than you can others in a month.—Surely, then, Philip might, in fuch a fituation, in a few hours rationally convince him of that important article, [of Jefus's being the Christ; considering how much he might be prepared, by what he knew of the Old Testament, and what he had heard and feen of Jesus and his disciples.—As to what other articles Philip taught him, we cannot be certain. He would learn them then, or afterwards, as he had opportunity. Posfibly he might come up to Jerusalem every year, to the paffover; and there perfect his knowlege in the doctrines of Christ, from conversing with the Apostles, or other Christians, Here Grito interposed, and said, if they would allow him, he would make one short remark, viz. that from a different reading in some manuscripts, and especially in that antient and valuable copy, the Alexandrian, he gathered, that the eunuch had the Spirit poured down upon bim from heaven, immediately after his baptism; or that he then received the miraculous gifts; whereby he might not only be further instructed and convinced himself, but able also to instruct, convert, or confirm others.-After the Jews in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and Galilee had had the gospel offered unto them; and as many as would had imbraced the offer;the next step in spreading the Christian religion was the preaching it to the devout gentiles. And the laft

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lift ftep was spreading it among the idolatrous gen- PARTIII. tiles. All these were the most gradual and reafonable steps that could have been taken. And it is not true (which your author has infinuated) that the Apostles never staid long enough in a place, to convince the people of the truth of Christianity upon rational and folid evidence. For (to passe by many other proofs and inflances that might be named) St. Paul was about two years at Corinth; and he intimates that he had been about three years at Ephefus, i.e. though he had made fome excurfions, yer he had spent the greatest part of three years among them. And by his affiduous preaching, both in public and private, and his many and fignal miracles, all the people of Afia propria had full opportunity to be instructed in the nature of Christianity, and to have sufficient evidence of the truth of it. He was, likewise, at Rome two years. And, though confined in his own hired house, he had the liberty to preach there, and as many as would might go and hear him; no man forbiding him or them.—By your author's account, Pyrrbo, one would imagine, that " they had not flaid a week, or at furthest above a month, any where; but had made one general proclamation for the town to come in at once and become Christians, without offering them any one rational argument to convince them. And then, if they refused, the The 62d dust was to be forthwith shaken off against them, and the text, Mat. doom prenounced. For whoever would not come upon x. 14fuch a short warning, and fnatch the critical opportunity, 5. and x. was for ever to fland to the loffe, and never have an 11. Acts opportunity to hear more of the Apostles or their as- xiii. 31. fiftants." Would not any person, who had never read See p. 39. the history of the acts of the Apostles, and was affured that in that history the facts are as your author has represented them, be very much furprized, upon reading that history, to find the

PARTIII. facts quite otherwise? that the Apostles worked miracles of various kinds and in great numbers? that their converts worked miracles? that they grounded their doctrine upon, and appealed to, those miracles? [In proof of this, see, among many other places, Acts ii. 13, &c. and iv. 9, &c. and xiv. 3. Rom, xii. 12. Heb. ii. 3, 4. that they took the most wife and rational methods that could be devised? and, finally that, as the most evident proof of their own fincerity, they chose rather to lay down their lives, than deny or even conceal fuch remarkable facts? The Apostles reafoned and argued, and that in the most clear and convincing manner. They argued with the Fews and devout Gentiles, as persons who already believed in the one true God, and gave credit to the writings of the Old Testament, which were read to them publicly every fabbath-day. And from prophefies and miracles they proved to them that Jesus was the Christ. [See Acts ii. 14, &c. and iii. 12, &c. and iv. 10, &c. and ix. 22, 28, 29. and x. 34, &c. and xiii. 16, &c. and xvii. 2, 4, 11, 17. and xviii. 4; &c. and xix. 8. and xxii. 1, &c. and xxviii. 23. In converting idolatrous Gentiles, they took another method, as the case required. They first argued with them from the works of creation and providence, to convince them of the being and perfections of the true God, and of the folly of idolatry; and then proved unto them that Jesus was sent of God to save mankind, as appeared from the miracles which he himself had worked, from his resurrection from the dead, and from the miracles which he had given them power to work. [See Atts xiv. 15, &c. and xvi. 26, &c. and xvii, 22, &c.] Thus, both Jesus himself, and his disciples after him, took the wifest and most effectual method to draw all men unto bim. By fuch arguments was king Agrippa 2 Bet

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Aggrippa almost persuaded to be a Christian. And by PARTHI. these arguments were many others persuaded to The 63dbecome the disciples of our Lord. By fuch suta- 67th texts, ble and strong arguments, adapted to the state John xii. both of the Jews and Gentiles, they showed the 32. Acts gospel to be a light prepared before the face of all xxvi. 28. people. His mercy did they openly show in the fight of 31, 32. the beathen and his truth toward the bouse of Israel; John i. 7, and they took the most effectual way to induce all to 12. Pfal. believe on his boly name, and that all the ends of the earth xcviii. 2, might see the salvation of our God. I have already 3. See p. taken notice of the Apostles tarrying a year or two in 43, 52. taken notice of the Apostles tarrying a year or two in fome large cities. But that was not all; they, moreover, left behind them every where a number of persons, to whom they had imparted the miraculous gifts, to carry on their religious worship, to spread the gospel further, and to confirm those that already believed. These were continued and standing proofs, unto the Christians, and to all other persons that would attend, of the truth of their apostolic mission. And further; the Apofiles themselves returned to the same places, once and again, as they had leifure, and vifited the churches which they had planted. They, therefore, gave opportunity for a re-hearing, and fufficient time to deliberate and consider. So that they, who were not convinced by the first visit, might be fully fatisfied by a second or third.—Finally; where they could not be in person, they sent Evangelists and Prophets, their affiftants, or wrote letters to fuch churches, or both. So that there was no lack of opportunity, or evidence, unto those that had ears to hear, and hearts to attend .- St. Paul first preached eight or nine years as a prophet; then he was made an Apostle. As a prophet, he preached at Damascus and Jerusalem: and in the countries of Syria and Cilicia, unto the Jews; and then spent a whole year with the church that had been devout Gentiles. blacken

PARTIII tiles, at Antioch in Syria. Then, going up to Jerufalem, he was made an Apostle. After which he made four or five apostolic journeys; which he generally begun from Jerusalem, from thence going down to Antioch in Syria. And then (after his first apostolic journey) returning to the places where he had been already. When he had fetled affairs among his former converts, he went on further, or to other more remote places, to collect and fetle churches there also. He labored above thirty years, and travelled above two thousand miles; with many sleeplesse nights and many fatiguing, laborious days; through hunger and thirst, cold and nakednesse, buffetings and stripes, stonings and repeted imprisonments, perils by sea and perils by land, and through almost continual danger of death ;-through fuch amazing toils and difficulties, he planted the gospel in many parts of the leffer Afia and of Greece, as well as confirmed the Christians in many other places, and particularly in the grand, imperial city of Rome. And, in his fecond visit to Rome, he is generally thought to have fuffered a violent death under that cruel and tyranical emperor, Nero. But it was not enough for that excellent man to be treated in fo barbarous and inhumane a manner, for above thirty years, and at last to die a martyr, purely because of his zeal to plant truth and righteousnesse in the earth. There are men, who do not declare for atheism, nor openly patronize vice, who can allow themfelves to stab his character, and murther the reputation of fo great and good, fo difinterested and benevolent a man, as St. Paul.—It is an unaccountable thing to me, who am warmed and animated with fuch a glorious example of piety and public fpirit, and who value the gospel for the excellent temper and fublime virtue, which it is directly calculated to promote, to see men so zealous to blacken blace to form met fifte fais, acking forms are learn that fous allegeduced.

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blacken the characters of those that spread it, and PARTIII. to run down the gospel itself, as if they could get some mighty matter thereby |\_and to do it by any methods, whether right or wrong; whether conlistent or inconsistent with themselves. Your author fais, most of the Apostles were illiterate persons. acknowleged. What then? Those illiterate perfons did what the pretended moral philosophers, who are enemies to the gospel, cannot do with all their learning and boafted fagacity. And we fay that that is a proof of the Apostles having the miraculous powers, which are ascribed to them. allege that St. Paul had the advantage of a learned education; we allow that too. What then? He renounced it all, and determined to learn the gospel purely from revelation, and to spread it by miracles. Where is the absurdity in all this reasoning? Do not Christians in general say, that the gospel is a matter of pure revelation? that no man, by human learning could ever have found it out? and that there was great wifdom in the choice of the men, who were to be Christ's Apostles, will easily appear to any one, that will carefully peruse Mr. Locke's Reasonablenesse of the Christian religion; or Miscellanea sacra, Essay II.-As the gospel was a matter of pure revelation, St. Paul was in the right of it, not to mix his buman learning with it, but faithfully to preach the gospel in that purity and fimplicity, in which he had received it from Christ. When he could work miracles, and inable others to work miracles, he had a much shorter and more effectual method of making converts and establishing them in the Faith, than from any thing he had learned in the schools of Tarsus, or at the feet of Gamaliel, in Jerusalem. In renouncing his buman learning, he did not renounce reason and common sense. But buman learning could be of no service to an Apostle, to make him mafter of the plan of the gospel, or to inable ferinons

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PARTIII. him to work miracles; though it may be of great service to us, if it be made a right use of. The Scriptures, indeed, and many other excellent antient writers cannot otherwise be understood; nor the languages, the phrases and customs be otherwise explained and set in a proper light .-When one confiders how much the diligent study of the Scriptures tends to keep alive and promote the study of other antient authors, one would not be so barbarous, as with great zeal to indeavor to overthrow Christianity; which is, in that view, the occasion of so much good. But, if Christianity could but be overthrown, it would greatly please some men, whatever barbarity was thereupon Ekely to infue; even though men loft the notion of the true God, and returned again to offer human facrifices to Moloch, or to any other fictitious deity, of their own absurd invention. Theophilus addressing himself to Crito, said, He had gone through the texts, which related to the Apoftles; and defired to know whether they thought proper at present to procede to any other? They all agreed that the evening was fo far spent, that they had best not to begin a new subject till the next meeting.

## DIALOGUE VI.

PYRRHO began the conversation this evening with saying, "that they were now to consider those texts, on which his author had built his main argument, p. 56, &c. viz. That it is the Spirit which insufes evidence and inspires conviction into all true believers; that, by one secret whisper, irradiates the soul at once with the knowlege of the Christian religion, and a thorough conviction of the truth of it; which renders needlesse the reading of the Scriptures and all other books, or the hearing the sermons

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fermons and instructions of divines :- For, by make PARTILL ing his constant residence, and being ever personally present with us, be dispenses his certain intelligences to the soul. This he calls the supernatural and all-sufficient source and origin of our Faith. To prove this he quotes feveral texts; and to fum up all, he represents the Scriptures as every were afferting that the Spirit is to inspire knowlege and conviction. Concerning this he falls into the language of some modern Entbufiasts, and, p. 101. calls it, that Savier which we feel. And, p. 58, speaking of the feeling of sense and appetite, he fais, Here is feeling opposed to feeling; a strong and palpable, internal sense to ballance all the motions of the external. Above all, he affures us, it is of immediate influence and operates without delay. We have now no occasion to make use of our own reason, or understanding; for by the inspiration of the Spirit, the most perfect and finished creed is produced at once. Thus instructed, we need not apply to libraries for a more competent information and discovery. What is there (sais he) after this, remainin buman wit, or these suspicious repositories of buman testimony, that can now deserve our least notice, or be thought of consequence to ingage a moment's attention upon this subject?—Neither do we now stand any longer in need of the credit of antient miracles, or the genuinenelle of distant records; a very slender and insufficient ground to answer all the great purposes and insure the rigid demands of religion. Since we can vouch, in its stead, a present and standing miracle of our own, whereby we are rendered infallible all our days, or not left liable one moment to a possibility of error and imposition. After which he speaks, with disdain, of the empty notion of manuscript authorities and paper revelations, compased of perishable materials, which must in time come to want repair, and must necessarily be the work of man. He infinuates that the facred writings bave been actually much adulterated. But if God, Hh 2

PARTIII by constant miracle, had preserved the Scripture in all its original purity, he is positive that it would still be absolutely defective and insufficient for any such reveling purpose, as they would expect. Again; he calls the Scripture a dead letter, and in many places speaks of it with contempt."-Theophilus heard all these things with great patience, and then began to anfiver by faying, I have here catched this infallible author of yours once more contradicting himself. For, if the Scriptures are a mere human invention, and deferve no regard; if they are altered and corrupted, and are no more than uncertain bear-lay, how came your author by all this intelligence about the Spirit? These manuscript authorities and paper revelations are by no means to be depended upon. Whence, then, had he this information, that the Spirit is to inspire us with the Christian Fuith, and that the Scriptures are of no use? Why does he quote texts and allege fuch a number of paffages from a suspicious book, a book which bas actually been much adulterated? How does he know but these very texts, which he has alleged to this purpose, are all adulterated? Or what can it fignify to cite passages from a mere buman testimony, which consists of nothing but uncertain bear-fay; -a book which deserves not the least notice, and cannot be thought of consequence enough to ingage one moment's attention? - Surprizing and quite unaccountable, indeed! that a man of his great acutenesse and uncommon penetration and fagacity, should spend so many moments, and quote so many passages from a a book, the most corrupt and precarious that ever was heard of! a mere human testimony, a groundlesse tradition, uncertain hear-say, that cannot prove any thing to the fatisfaction of any thinking, reasonable man !- Thus have I, upon his own principles, fairly fer afide all his supposed proofs from texts of Scripture. And, unlesse he has had a revelation,

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velation, that the Spirit inspires conviction into every PARTIII: believer, -he can have no proof of his main position. From reason, that blind guide, he will not pretend to draw any fuch conclusion: For he hath expressly declared, p. 7. that judging at all of religious matters is not the proper province of reason; or, indeed, an affair where she has any concern. And, in many other places, he has given reason many bitter, and hard names; and intirely precluded himself from making any use of it, upon this subject. He likewife, represents the Scripture as a mere dead letter; an empty notion of manuscript authorities, and paper revelations, which can deserve no regard. And, if he hath had a particular revelation made to him, of fo momentous a truth, he will not gain much credit, or make many converts to his prophetic meffage; unleffe he work a miracle, or give fome other proof that he is inspired, besides his mere faying fo. For his own bare word will go but a little way. Nay, according to his own principles, even his working miracles would not prove the truth of his doctrine; because miracles bave, time out of mind, been undoubtedly performed in favor of false doctrines, as well as of the true. So that he feems to me to be fet fast, and to have no way to turn himfelf for the support of his cause! So unhappy a thing is it, when a man undertakes a bad cause! So does this famous and celebrated performance come out, upon examination! Such a contradiction in the main point is like a mill-stone hanging about its neck, which must needs fink it deep, and plunge it into utter destruction. Surely, it will not (after this) be allowed a sufficient proof either of the author's great talent at reasoning, or of his being under the immediate inspiration of the Spirit; and what other proofs of his great abilities he has given the world, let them that know it, fay !- It appears to me that he does not much matter it, if he does contradict himself, provided he can puzzle and perplex others. But

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text. I Cor. Xii. 3. explained.

PARTIII. But his views be to himself! For the sake of other persons, who yet retain a value for the Scriptures, I will indeavor to clear up those passages, which he hath so miserably abused and perverted. I begin The 68th with his principal text, i. e. No man can fay that Jefus is the Lord, but by the Hely Ghost. Now, in this and the two following chapters, the Apostle is most evidently speaking of the supernatural gifts See p. 56. and miraculous powers of the Spirit, which were, in that age, fo commonly imparted unto Christians, According to the best interpreters that I have seen, the first verse should have been translated thus, Now concerning spiritual persons, brethren, I would not bave you ignorant. Ver. 2. You know that you were formerly Gentiles, carried away unto the worship of dumb idols, sidols, which could neither speak them. felves; nor inspire you with prophety and the gift of tongues; -but unto fuch dumb idols were you carried away, even as you were led by your priefts. And, as to the Jews, who fay that men of their nation only have the Spirit, I inform you, verse 3. that no man speaking by the Spirit of Ged [sais that Jesus is an anathema, or calleth Jesus accursed. .There is another text cited by your author; and, as it is of the same import, the same interpretation will do for them both. Another of the Apostles is recommending free inquiry, and a careful examination of the spirits, because many false prophets were gone out into the world. Now as to prophets, they were directed thus to judge of them, Every spirit is of God who confesseth that Jesus, who is come in the flesh, is the Christ: But every spirit, who confesset nat that Jesus, who is come in the flesh, is the explained. Christ, is not of God. The meaning is, whoever See p. 78. comes under the character of a prophet, or inspire ed person, and contradicts a known and well attested truth, can never speak by the Spirit of God, For the Spirit never inspires any man with any guidalf, provided he can puzzle and perplex others.

The 69th text, 1 John

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thing but truth. And the prophet, who not only PARTIIL confesses, but supports truths of great importance, doth thereby give evident proofs of his being fent of God.—To return to the former text;—St. Paul fais, As no man can fay that Fefus is an anathema, and have the Spirit; fo no man can fay that Jefus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit, i. e. no man can say that Fefus is the Lord [and confirm that doctrine with supernatural gifts and miracles but by the Holy Spirit. This is Dr. Whithy's interpretation of the words; and I appeal to you, Crito, whether the word, here translated [ fay, ] doth not fometimes signifie to affert and prove; or not only to fay, but to make good what a man fais. Crito readily refered them to four places of the New Testament, where he took the word to have that fignification, viz. John x. 25. and xii. 48, 49. and xviii. 21. Alls xxiv. 20. That is fufficient to my purpose, answered Theophilus; but in this place it must necessarily have that meaning, or the expression be elleiptical, and supplied as Dr. Whithy has done. Because any man, without the Holy Spirit, may pronounce the words, or fay that Jesus is the Lord. But no man could have come to the knowlege of it, as the Apostles did, without a revelation; not proved it to the world, but by miracles. No flesh and blood Ino The 70th mortal man ] could have reveled it to them; but they and 71 ft were all taught of God. And baving thus beard and texts exlearned of the Father, they came to Christ. As the plained, Matt. xvi. Apostles could not have known that Jesus was the 17. John Christ, but by the Holy Spirit, which was first given vi. 45. See to Jesus, and then unto them; fo they could not P. 76. have faid, and proved it to the world, but by the Holy Spirit, which inabled them to work miracles, in great abundance, in confirmation of it. In this fense, the words connect admirably well with what follows, verse 4, &c. Now there are diversities of gifts, but all procede from one and the felf-same Spirit.

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PARTIII. And then he reckons up the gifts themselves, some of which were peculiar to the Apostles, others imparted unto inferior prophets; but those gifts I have particularly mentioned above, when I laid before you the evidences of Christianity; and would now only observe that the Apostle is not here fpeaking of the way, by which Christians in all ages should come to the knowlege and belief of Fesus's being the Lord; but of the miraculous gifts, by wich the Apostles and Christian prophets did then know and prove it. For he mentions the gift of bealing, the working of miracles, prophefy, discerning of Spirits, divers kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues, and other miraculous gifts ;and then fais, ver. 11. All these worketh one and the felf same Spirit, dividing them to every man, separately, as be pleaseth. - After that he carefully informs them of the defign and value of the several gifts, teaching them to prefer those that tended most to edification; but withal affuring them, that the moral virtues were preferable to them all. Now what is all this to the case of common Christians in these later ages? we may, indeed, and ought from hence to learn, what abundant evidence there was for the truth of the Christian religion, when it was first planted. But those rules, which concerned the use of the spiritual gifts, can be no rules to us, who are altogether destitute of those miraculous gifts. It is true, we may fay that Jesus is the Lord, without the Holy Spirit; but we cannot prove it in the way the Apostles proved it, i. e. by working miracles ourselves, and imparting miraculous gifts unto others. We can, indeed, prove it from their writings, without which we could not have believed it ourselves, or proved it to others.-And, in this sense, no man could now say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit. For, unleffe they, who first published it to the world, had had the Holy Spirit, there LISA

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there would not have been any rational grounds PARTIIP for us to have regarded them. But, as the Apoftles, who planted this doctrine, had the Holy Spirit; and made that unquestionable, by a train of miracles; their mission was divine, their testimony is true; and from thence we justly infer that Jesus is The72dthe Lard, as they afferted and proved.—Our Savior, 75thtexts, John xiv. a little before his death, told the Apostles, that he 16. and was shortly to leave them, upon which forrow filled xv. 26. their hearts. To comfort them he promised, when and xvi. he departed out of this world, he would fend down 13. Matt. the Holy Spirit, [which learned men fay, he called or John the Advocate, and hot the Comforter, as we have xiv. 16. rendered the word | that that Spirit of Truth, which See p. 56. be would fend, and which proceded from the Father, Sc. flould lead them into all truth, necessary for underflanding and spreading the Gospel; and that be hould also show them things to come, or inable them to predict future, contingent events, and testify of Christ, or glorify bim; for be shall take of mine (fais our Lord) and shew it unto you. And finally, tho he himself was to ascend and leave them; yet the Spirit was to be in them, and to abide with them for ever ; to be with them always, to the end of their lives. After Christ's ascension, these promises were accomplished; the Spirit was poured out; supernatural gifts and miraculous powers were bestowed in the greatest plenty. Not only was the Spirit poured down upon the Apostles, and abode with them; but most, or all, of the adult Christians, wherever any Apostle came, feem to have had the miraculous gifts, as I have already intimated, p. 58, 59. Hence it was, that the bodies of Christians were called tem. The 76th ples of the Holy Ghost; and the Spirit is said to and 77th have witnessed with [ or to ] their spirit, that they I Cor. vi. were the children of God. For, by having the Spirit of 19. Rom. Christ, they had a proof that they were his; inasmuch viii. 16. as the Spirit was not imparted to any but Christ's See p. 500 Jege disciples.

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p. 56.

text explained,

PARTIM. disciples. The Spirit, therefore, was a pleage of their adoption, and an earnest of their title to the heavenly inheritance. - " Pyrrbo inquired, why Theophilus omitted one of the texts mentioned in the same page?" Theophilus answered, Because the The 78th operations of the Spirit are no where in Scripture, text, Rom. termed the power of God unto salvation, as your author i. 16. See hath afferted. St. Paul doth indeed fay, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, unto every one that believeth." But your author can put a meaning upon the words, which (it is evident) the Apostle never had.- " Pyrrbo asked, whether St. Paul had not faid, By grace you are faved, through Faith; and that not of yourselves: It is the gift of God?" Yes, Eph. ii. 8. replied Theophilus, he hath faid so; but in a sense See p. 57. very different from what your author has given the words.-The Epiftle was writ to a church, that had formerly been idolatrous Gentiles, and then guilty of great vices. He, therefore, puts them in mind of the grace, or favor, God had shown them, in calling them into the Christian church, and into the way of falvation. Their former, profligate lives had merited no fuch thing, at the hands of God. No; by grace they were faved; [it was the effect of free grace, or pure, undeferved favor, that they were put into the way of falvation;] -through faith, for by the method prescribed in the Gospel; not by the Law of Moses, as the Jews and judaizing Christians would have persuaded them] -And that not of themselves, [i. e. the idolatrous Heathens could never have found out the method of falvation through Jesus Christ, by their own study, or reafoning; it being a matter of pure revelation, ]-it is the gift of God, [who inspired the Apostles, sent them to preach the Gospel both to Jews and Gentiles; and inabled them to work miracles to rouze men to attention, and spread this important knowlege

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lege among them. ] - Not of works, left any man PARTIIL hould boaft. It was not owing to the works, which they had done, whilest they were idolatrous Gentiles; for then they were very wicked. God's fending the Gospel among them could not, therefore, be as a reward for their works, left any of them should bave boasted; for which might prevent every one of them from boafting that his former life and converfation had merited fuch a favor, as a reward at the hands of God. ]-As the Gospel was defigned for the world in general, both Jews and Gentiles, Jesus Christ is called, that light which came The 80th. into the world, to inlighten every man: And it is faid and 81st very justly, that the grace of God, [that divine fa- texts, Johni. 19. vor which is reveled in the Gospel, and] which Tit. ii. 11. bringeth salvation, bath appeared unto all men. These See p. 58. things, as they stand in the Scriptures, are very plain and evident. And fuch texts need not have been mentioned, if they had not been made use of, to a very different purpose.—It is true, though all, both Jews and Gentiles, had the Gospel offered to them, none but the pious and well-disposed imbraced it. They were the only persons given to The 82d Christ of bis Father. And none could be admitted text, John to the favor attending Christ's true disciples, but See p. 57. fuch as the Father pleased; No man can come unto me, (fais Christ) except it be given bim of my Father; who allowed none but the well-disposed to come unto him, so as finally to be accepted through him. -" Pyreho mentioned another text, whereby (he faid) his author had indeavored to prove that a rational Faith could not be required; but it must be an infused, or inspired Faith; the word of Faith, The 83d put into our mouth and into our beart." Theophilus text, Rom. observed that, in the passage referred to, the Apo- See p. 79 file is speaking of the unbelieving Jews, whose salvation he most earnestly defired and prayed for; because they bad a zeal (as they imagined) for God and

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PARTIII. his law; but it was not a zeal according to knowlege; it was not a wife and rational zeal, agreeable to truth and founded on evidence. For they being ignorant of God's righteousnesse, for of the way, in which God will accept men as righteous ;-they being voluntarily ignorant of this, I fay, notwithstanding it is plainly reveled in the Gospel; ] and going about to establish their own righteousnesse, Tby a conformity to the law of Mofes | bave not submitted themselves to the righteoufnesse of God [i.e. have not fought righteousnesse by the method prescribed in the Gospel; wherein the way of being justified, or of being treated as righteous by God, the Judge of all, is clearly reveled.] For fthe dispensation of the law was not final; but | Christ is the end of the law for righteousnesse unto every one that believeth; for it was the end and defign of the law to bring perfons unto Jesus Christ for righteousnesse; that ever ry one, that believeth in him, may be justified, or be accepted as righteous in the fight of God.] For Moses [ in this manner ] describeth the righteousnesse which is of the law, that the man, who doth those things, shall live by them; i.e. the man, who obeys the law perfectly, shall have life thereby. ] - The Jews expected the Meffiab to be their Savior, or Deliverer; -and fo far they argued right. But then they expected that he would in person reign among them, deliver them from their enemies round about, make them rich and honorable in the earth, or great and powerful among the nations. That was the righteousnesse they sought after. When Jesus appeared, their reckoning was up; and they were daily looking when the kingdom of God would appear, or the kingdom be reftored to Frael. The miracles worked by Jesus concurred to persuade them that he was the Messab: But several things alienated their minds from him; -his mean parentage, his poverty, his contradicting the traditions of

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of their elders, his prefering moral duties to ritual Partie or ceremonial, his foretelling the deftruction of their temple, city and nation; and, above all, his dying the ignominious death of the croffe: A dead man, (they thought) could never be the Meffiah. or the deliverer; even of those that believed in him. He must come down from heaven, or rife up out of the grave, and come and reign personally among them. Whereas they had no notion of his faving them from their fins, his delivering them from their spiritual and worst enemies; and that the believing in him, as the Christ, who was not only crucified, but raifed from the dead; and aftended linto heaven, was fufficient to fave them, without his personal appearance among them. These were the prejudices of the Jews, which St. Paul is here indeavoring to remove; and to that purpose he expresses himself in words taken out of their law; But the righteousnesse, which is of Faith, speaketh after this manner, for may be thus described, Say not in thine beart, who shall ascend into beaven; that is to bring Christ down from above? Or, who shall descend into the deep, for into the grave; that is, to bring Christ up again from the dead? as is he was still in the grave, and not rifen, again. You quite mistake the nature of the falvation, or deliverance, to be effected by the Melhab. There can be no occasion to fetch him out of the grave; because he is already risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven; neither is there occasion to ascend into heaven, and bring Christ down from thence, to reign personally upon earth; inasmuch as the deliverance by him is of a spiritual nature; a deliverance from fin, and that you may be made righteous by Faith in him, And, in order to know and obtain the benefit of that, you need not go far, -For the word is nigh you, even in your mouths and in your bearts; [you have already been made acquainted

BARTIII quainted with it, and it is the matter of your daily conversation; even that word of Faith which we preach. The fum and substance of which is this. ] If you will confesse with your mouth that fesus is Lord. fi. e. openly and fincerely acknowlege him to be constituted head and Lord of all; and as a proof thereof, believe in your beart for firmly believe] that God bath raised bim from the dead,-you shall be faved; or you will then be in the true way to falvation, whether you have formerly been a Tew or a Gentile! For there is, under the Gospel, no difference between them. This is the interpretation, which I have gathered from that judicious and free inquirer, the excellent Mr. Locke. But your author has taken no notice of the Apostle's answering the objections of the unbelieving Jews, or that he is showing that their notions and expectations were groundleffe. He hath no regard to the occasion of the words, or to the scope and connection of the place; but hath fallen into the very fault, which he has condemned in divines, p. 77. viz. from a strange misapplication of a straggling text; some faint outline, which seemed, be fancied, to countenance such a notion, he pretends, that here is a passage, that most fully describes to us the true nature of Faith in profest opposition to that mistaken notion of a rational one, which some bad, it seems, erroneously entertained.—Was it, then, a rational Faith, for the Feets to expect righteousnesse by the law, which faid, Curfed is every one, who continueth not in all shings that are written in the book of the law, to do them? Was that a zeal of God, according to knowlege? Or was it a rational thing for them to expect the personal reign of the Messiab upon earth; to deliver them from the Romans, and to exalt the grandeur of their nation; when (as I have plainly shown, p. 211, &c.) their own prophets had expresly predicted a spiritual and suffering Meffiab? quainted

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Messiab?—Was it not, therefore, more rational, after PARTIII, such clear and expresse prophesies, to expect from the Messiab, a spiritual salvation; and to conclude it sufficient to believe and obey him; to entertain his word in their hearts, and to be influenced by it in their lives; and, in this way, to hope for everlasting life?—Pyrrbo said, he believed there would be texts enow still remaining, for another evening's conversation. Upon which the whole company desired they might be deferred till then.—And so, for the present, they all mixed in the conversation, and talked about indifferent subjects.

## DIALOGUE VII.

" DYRRHO had found fome more texts, which feemed to favor his author's defign. There were two, which he alleged to show that, though no critical and diffinct account can be given of the inspiration of the Spirit; yet from the effect we may be led to the cause;—though we are not able to explain the manner; nor to trace in any adequate degree either the cause or course of its operation. When Theophilus had found the pages refered to, he began with our Savior's answer to Nicodemus,-The wind bloweth where it pleaseth, and you bear the The 84th found thereof; but cannot tell whence it cometh, and text, John whither it goeth. So is every one that is borne of the iii. 8, 9. Spirit.—Our Savior's conversation with Nicodemus See p. 107. is the most just and proper, provided we attend to his character, and to all the circumstances. He was a Pharisee, and labored under the common prejudices of the Jews, and as he was a ruler among them, and of a timorous temper, he came to fefus by night;—however he owned his miracles, and thence inferred his divine mission;—most probably taking him for the Messiah. "Jesus let him know that coming to him by night was not sufficient;

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PARTILL fufficient; neither had he, as a few, any right to be a member of the Meffiah's kingdom, but he must, like other Proselytes (in the Tewish phrase) be borne again, or publicly take upon him the profession of the Christian religion, by baptism; or else be could not see the kingdom of God, could not become a member of Christ's church, or kingdom." Nicodemus thought himself already one of the people of God, because he was a Few. If our Savior had told him that an Heathen, in order to become a Profelyte to the Jewish religion, must be borne again, by baptism and circumcision, he could have readily understood him; because that was their usual phraseology for the initiating of Heathen Proselytes into the Tewish religion. But that he, a Jew, and (as fuch) already one of the people of God, (hould have occasion for being initiated, like an Heathen Profelyte, was what he could not understand. He therefore, could think of no other meaning to Felius's words, but the literal meaning; and yet was furprized to hear him talk of being borne again, in the natural fense. Jesus explained himself, and confirmed what he had faid-affuring him that unlesse a man seven a Few] were regularly initiated into his church, or borne of Water and of the Spirit, be could not fee [or enter into] the kingdom of God. And, from the history of the Atts of the Apostles, and their Epiftles, we accordingly find, that that was the way, in which Jews, as well as other persons, were initiated into the Christian church,being first baptized with water, and then with the Holy Spirit. [See, belides many other places, Alls ii. 28. and viii. 12, &c., and xix 1, &c.] Our Savior goes on to fay, ver. 6. Being borne of the Refs. being a few by birth, did not initiate him into the Christian church; neither would it have done to, if it had been ever to often repeted. But being borne of Water and of the Spirit would inijunicient; tiate

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tiate him into the fpiritual dispensation. - Nicodemus, PARTIII. deeply tinctured with the Jewish prejudices, was very much aftonished at Fesus's talk. Our Lord observed it, and said unto him, Marvel not that I said unto you, that you [Jews] must be borne again. And then ver. 8. he attacks another Jewish prejudice in Nicodemus, and intimated that the Gentiles should be called into the kingdom of God, under the Melliab, and should injoy equal privileges; The wind bloweth where it pleaseth, and you hear the found thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it south: [You cannot tell all the points from whence it cometh, nor to how many points it steereth its course; but it appeareth, from the found, and other effects of it, that it bloweth to and from all points of the compasse; ] so is every one that is borne of the Spirit po shall men come from all parts of the world, from every point of the compasse, and (by being baptized with Water and with the Spirit) be initiated as Profelytes to my teligion: Or (as our Savior elsewhere expressed the fame thing,) They shall come from the East, and from the West, from the North, and from the South; and hall fit down in the kingdom of God.—This additional discovery increased Nicodemus's surprize, and be said unto bim, bow can these things be? Jesus, with the greatest propriety, answered, Are you a master in Ifrael, and know not these things? Can you be ignorant of your own phrases, in which being borne again fignifies Profelytism; and which you are every day using, concerning Heathers coming over to your religion? And, why cannot you understand the fame phrases, when applied to Jews entering into my church? And, Can you [a master in Israel] be ignorant of God's design to accept the Gentiles, as his people, under the Meffiab, when your antient prophets have, in many places and clearly, spoken of this remarkable event?"-I could eafily go on

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PARTIII. to show you, how our Savior attacked some other

of Nicodemus's prejudices; intimating that he was to be crucified; and that they were wrong in expecting a temporal triumphant prince, when the prophets had foretold a spiritual, suffering Messiab; -and that the heathen world was not to be condemned, but faved, by his coming. But enough has been faid, to show that this text doth not prove that for which your author hath alleged it. I freely acknowlege that the infpiration of the Spirit was granted unto the disciples of Jesus; and that the effect was visible, though the cause was invisible, and lay hid within them; and that these operations of the Spirit could not be discerned by other persons, any otherwise than by the external effects; any more than the thifting about of the wind, from one point of the compasse to another, could be perceived but by the effects which follow from its different courses.—But the former seems to me to be the true and proper interpretation of our Savior's words.—The other text; refered The 85th to, by your author, Pyrrbo, has no relation to text, Mark inspiring conviction, insusing evidence, or these operations iv. 26, &c. Seep. 108. of the Spirit, of which he has faid so much; but relates purely to the gradual progresse of the Gospel. So is the kingdom of God (sais our Savior) as if a man cast seed into the earth, and should sleep [a little] and rife night and day, [to watch it;] and the feed should spring and grow up, he knows not how. Now, this is a most just and beautiful comparison, to represent the gradual progresse of the truth of the Gospel, and its operations upon the minds of men, which are filent, invisible, and by infenfible degrees, which cannot be perceived but by time and repeted observation. But this is no illu-The 86th stration of your author's subject, neither hath it any relation thereto.- "Then Pyrrbo faid to The

ophilus, I know you have already intimated your

text, I Cor. ii. 14. See P. 103.

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diffike of Bishop Beveridge's interpretation; but PARTIII. I expect that you should give us your sense of the text, on which he hath grounded his obfervations." I am willing (replied Theophilus) to do my best to clear up any passage of Scripture; but I do not think myself obliged to stand to the opinion of any man, what weight foever bis name may carry with it;—unlesse it be both reasonable in itself, and agreeable to the scope and connection of the text from whence it is taken. The passage you refer to, is in our common English translation thus rendered, The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishnesse to him; neither can be know them, because they are spiritually discerned. By the natural man, some understand the animal or seusual man. I desire Crito would inform us, whether that is the proper fignification of the word in the original. Crito faid that, as Juxn was with the antients, the sensuive soul, or the seat of the passions and appetites, duxing must mean the animal or sensual man. The word is used only in four other texts, in all the New Testament; and in every one of them it fignifies, either animal, or fenfual. In two of the places our English version hath rendered it fenfual, viz. James iii. 15. and Jude ver. 19. Indeed our would be the proper word to expresse the natural man.—Theophilus thanked Crito, and faid, that is sufficient to my present purpose; for, if that be the sense of the word elsewhere, here is enough in the context, to determine it to be the meaning of it here. What the Apostle hath said, plainly relates to the animal, or senfual man, whose prevailing regard was to the interests and gratifications of this fensible, animal life. The sensual man, swho lives a mere animal life, like a brute, or who indulges his fenses and appetites as the chief good, receiveth not the Kk 2

PARTIII. things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolifbuelle unto bim; neither can be know [or approve] them, because they are spiritually discerned. It requires a well-disposed mind to perceive the worth and excellence of spiritual objects, and have a proper relish for them.-St. Paul doth not here fay, what another late author bath represented him as faying, [No man knows or understands the things of God. but by the Spirit of God speaking in bim. ] Neither doth he affert that a man must be inspired, before he can find out the true sense of Scripture, or be let into the mysteries of the Gospel, or apprebend the things of God: But only that a man, that is animal, fenfual or wicked, cannot perceive the excellence of spiritual objects, or have a proper relish for the things which God has reveled by his Spirit, and which are now contained in the Holy Scriptures ;- for they are the things of the Spirit of God. This is otherwise expressed by the same Apostle, viz. The carnal mind is enmity to God, for it is not subject to the law of God; neither (as long as it continues carnal and wicked) can it be subjest thereto.-You fee plainly, the Apostle fais nothing to your author's purpose. Here is not one word about the Spirit's infusing Faith, inspiring conviction; rendering every believer infallible all his days; here is nothing faid of a constant and particular revelation imparted separately and supernaturally to every individual; ffee the author, p. 112.] or any thing like that which he has laid down as the grand foundation of his hypothesis .- " Pynrho faid that, as Crito had injoined him to bring like things together, he would now mention lome texts, which his

The 87th, author had alleged to prove the same things."—As 88th texts soon as he had found the passage referred to, Eph. iv. 3. Theophilus observed that the author, in order to 15. See show that there may be an unity of Faith, without p. 76. an unity of understanding, quotes a passage out of

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our English Liturgy, which is taken from the Scrip. PARTILL tures, and which there evidently relates, not to unity of Faith, but to their preserving mutual peace and concord. With this view the Christians are exhorted to preferve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. " Pyrrbo took notice that his author had, to the same purpose, alleged what the Apostle has faid, about a man's praying with the Spirit, without understanding what be himself sais." Theophilus replied, I have had occasion to speak of the miraculous gifts, once and again; and have obferved that the gift of tongues was one of them, and the interpretation of tongues, another.—The church at Corinth abounded with such gifts and powers, and St Paul was very careful to direct them in the right use of them. In the begining of this chapter the Apostle exhorted them to prefer those gifts of the Spirit which tended most to edification. And, to that end, they were particularly to prefer prophefying, (i. e. preaching or praying by inspiration, in a language understood by the audience) to speaking, (i. e. praying, or prophelying) in an unknown tongue. For (lais the Apostle) be, that speaketh in an unknown tongue, speaketh not unto men, but unto God; for no man [present] understandeth bim. Howbeit, by the Spirit, be speaketh mysteries. Whereas he, that prophesseth, speaketh unto men, for edification, and exhortation, and comfort. However it is plain, from ver. 4. that be, who fooke in an unknown tongue, for in a language unknown to the congregation, understood himself: For it is exprefly faid that be edified bimfelf; just as the other, who prophefied in a known tongue, edified the church. Now, if he had not understood what he faid, he could not have edified himself; for where there is no knowlege, there can be no edification.—Every man, in the common course of things, thinks in some language, most frequently

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PARTILL (I suppose) in his native tongue; and, when the Spirit inabled any man to prophely in an unknown tongue, he might not be able, of himself, perfeetly to remember, and readily and fluently to repete, the whole discourse, in the language most generally understood by the audience. For that reason, they had, as another spiritual gift, the interpretation of tongues. Upon these things the Apostle grounds his advice, ver. 13. Wherefore, let bim, that speaketh in an unknown tongue, pray that he may interpret. For, if I pray in an unknown tongue, my Spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful; [i. e. if I, by the affistance of the Spirit, pray in a language unknown to the congregation, I do, indeed, by my spiritual gift, actually pray to God; but then my meaning is unfruitful; the fense of what I utter must be unprofitable to the audience, because they do not understand me.] What is to be done, therefore? I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray also with understanding, for so as to be understood by the audience.] I will fing with the Spirit, and I will fing also with understanding, for I will take care that the hearers shall understand what I fing, If you do otherwise, when you shall blesse [God] by the Spirit, bow shall be, who filleth the feat of the [private, or] unlearned man, fay, Amen, upon your giving of thanks; seeing be understandeth not what you say? For [when you, by the Spirit, praise God] you do, indeed, give thanks [very] well; but the other [the unlearned man, who understands you not,] is not edified. Here is not one word relating to the worthip of Christians in all ages of the church; or of the Spirit, from the lips of a whole affembly, contriving to speak the same thing. Here is nothing abfurd, nor any thing liable to reproach or raillery; not one word of any man's praying by the Spirit without understanding what he himself uttered. Such false and groundlesse ridicule must fall upon the n

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the person, who hath so grosly misrepresented this PARTIE and several other texts of Scripture. Pyrrho went The 89th on thus, If I take my author right, he thinks the text, Acts Apostles themselves spoke only one language, and ii. 4. &c. yet every member of every nation, at the same instant, Seep. 108. beard the same divine lesson, in his own proper language. So that the hearers all understood what was faid, though the Apostles neither understood, nor spoke, any language but their own." Theophilus observed that, in the place refered to, there is an account of the first effusion of the Spirit, after Christ's ascension. John Baptist had often faid, though he could baptize with Water only; yet the Meffiah, who was approaching, would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with Fire, or with the Holy Spirit, accompanied with the external appearance of a flame of Fire. Now was that promife accomplished. And, among other things, it is faid, that there appeared unto them divided tongues, like as of Fire; and that a tongue rested upon every one of them. The points of flames were, by the Jews, usually called tongues of Fire: And here we are informed that the rays of a glory first filled the upper part of the room; and, after some time, a distinct ray, like a tongue of Fire, fetled upon every one of the persons prefent. And [together with this glorious appearance] they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues [besides their own native language, as the Spirit gave them utterance, for as the Spirit inabled them to expresse themselves. \_\_It is faid, indeed, that some few, both of the antients and moderns, have imagined that the Apostles poke only their own native language; but every man, of every nation then present, heard what was said in his own proper language. Now, according to that interpretation, though the Apostles did not speak these leveral languages, nor even fo much as understand them, yet the audience heard them distinctly, and perfectly

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PARTIII. perfectly understood them .- This, therefore, will widely differ from the last objection, in which it was infinuated that neither speaker nor hearer understood what was said. But, whatever consequences would follow, if fuch an interpretation were allowed, they affect not the Scripture itself, which fais that, when " they were filled with the Holy Spirit, they began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." It is not faid, they began to fpeak in their own tongue, and the people heard them in other tongues. Again, ver. 6. The whole multitude were aftonished; because they beard them speaking, every man in his own language." And they thus expressed their astonishment, verses 7, 8. by faying one to another, " Are not all these, that speak, Galileans? How comes it to passe, then, that we hear them, every one of us, in our own native dialect?" and ver. 11, after the feveral nations, which composed the audience, are reckoned up, -they faid, " we heat them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."-Now this is exactly agreeable to all the other places, where the gift of tongues is spoken of. For they all represent the persons indued with that gift, as speaking the languages of the various countries, or persons. And, indeed, when they went to plant Christianity among the nations, it must have greatly facilitated their work, to be able to preach the Gospel intelligibly to every man in his own language.—As your author's interpretation fails, all he has built upon it, must be without foun-The goth dation.\_ " Pyrrbo referred Theophilus to the next text, Mat. page of his author, and faid he wanted an interx. 19, 20. pretation of the text there alluded to." Theophilm Seep. 109. observed that Jefus was giving his Apostles their commission, and telling them what treatment they must expect. And, among other things, he inth mutes that they flould meet with perfecution, and

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he hurried before princes and magistrates, which PARTIII. would, in the event, turn to the furtherance of the Gospel. But (sais he) when they shall deliver you un [to such great personages] be not anxious bow, or what you shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same bour what you shall speak. For it is not you yourselves that [shall then] speak; but the Spirit that speaketh in you. The like promise is repeted, Mark xiii. 11. Luke XII. 11, 12. and XXI. 12, &c. In all which places it was made unto those who were to plant the Gospel; and, in order to that, were to be indued with the miraculous gifts. As the Apostles were to be so much exposed, nothing could have been more proper than fuch extraordinary affiftance of the Spirit. For they could never have been prevailed upon, to undertake fuch an hazardous work, or been able to have borne up, under fuch repeted difficulties and discouragements; they could not have spoken with such ease and freedom. before the greatest personages and most august or numerous affemblies, if they had not had fuch divine support. And, as they were favored with so great a variety of other spiritual gifts, there was nothing abfurd, but a great deal of propriety, in their having this also.—However, here is no intimation of the Apostles not understanding what they themselves uttered upon fuch occasions; nor is this a promise to all Christians, of all ages and nations, strongly to support them upon emergencies, when they are persecuted, without so much as a single thought or suggestion of their own, by way of forecast: Or that the Spirit will pronounce for us a regular series of arguments; or discourse extempore through our organs, for our vindication in a court of justice.—As to the Spirit's being capable of distating sentiments in secret to our understandings; or of prompting our lips with expressions (as your author phraseth it,) of puting belief into our bearts, or words into our mouths; and giving us what to think, as well as TROUS

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P. 114.

The gift

PARTIII. what to fay; —we have no manner of doubt. we are fully perfuaded that the Spirit is capable of doing all these things, and more too; if God should see fit to grant us such an effusion of the Spirit, as he did to the Apostles and first Christians. But the question is not, concerning the ability of the Spirit to do fuch things; but concerning what grounds and reasons we have, now, to expect any fuch thing?-" Pyrrbo faid, he had observed two texts more, which Theophilus had Eccles. vii. not touched upon, and which seemed to found very well to his author's purpose. The one was, Make not thyself overwise; why shouldest thou destroy thyself? And the other, the concluding sentence of the whole book." As to the former of these (said Theophilus) Solomon's words, at length, are a caution both to the righteous and to the wicked. He bad observed a just man to perish in his righteousnesse, and a wicked man to prolong bis life in bis wickednesse: Upon this he grounds his advice to persons of both these characters. To the righteous, he recommends prudence and discretion, in these words; Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself overwise: Wby shouldest thou destroy thyself? To the wicked man, he recommends repentance and amendment; intimating, though he had hitherto prolonged his life in his wickednesse, yet that could not always preferve him ; and his advice to him is, Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish. Why shouldest thou die before thy time? Now, take both these rules together, and they will amount to much the fame thing with our Savior's admirable direction to his disciples, Be wife as serpents and barmlesse as doves. This interpretation may be illustrated from instances in various stations of life; A king that would be for making laws, to remedy every little inconvenience in the state, and that should put such laws rigorously in execution, would be righteous

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teous overmuch, and make bimself overwise. And, in PARTIH. that way, would (most probably) destroy himself. For human affairs are, at present, such as that every little inconvenience cannot be remedied; that which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. How well foever he might design, the people would look upon fuch a king as a tyrant, and would (very likely) be for treating him accordingly.—On the other hand, a king that should have no regard to the remedy of greater evils; nor any concern to promote the good of the community, in any tolerable degree, would certainly be overmuch wicked, and act a foolish part, and would be in eminent danger of plots and conspiracies, and of thereby dying before bis time. Again; a private man, that should stand up for his rights in every punctilia; and, to support his property, should be always quarrelling, or going to law for every little trifle; -fuch an one would be righteous overmuch, and make bimself overwise; and take the ready way to destroy bimself. On the other hand, a man that has no regard to his property; who lets every body cheat him at pleasure, till he becomes unable to pay his just debts, would certainly be overmuch wicked. And the being reduced to fuch straights, is the way to perish, or to die before bis time. finally, let us take another instance, which may come nearer our present purpose 3-Suppose a zealous protestant should, without an extraordinary commission from God, go to Spain, Portugal, or other Popish countries, and there publicly throw down their altars, or idols, or fnatch the hoft out of the priest's hands, at the time of high masse, and stamp upon it; and should thereby expole himself to the dreadful tribunal of the inquisition, and (after various tortures) to a cruel death;—he would be righteous overmuch, and make bimself Ll 2

PART III. bimfelf overwise, and would evidently thereby destroy bimself .- On the other hand, a man who is indifferent about truth and falshood, unconcerned about all religion, and makes fense and appetite his counfellors and his guides; - fuch an one would be overmuch wicked and foolish, and might (possibly) through his extravagance and debauchery, die before bis time.—From these hints you may perceive that the rule is in itself a wife and excellent rule, and applicable to many cases (like other proverbial maxims) where the observation of it would be of great advantage :- that men should avoid wickednesse; and, together with their virtue and piety, exercise great prudence, was Solomon's grand defign; as appears from what follows. It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this, [i. e. not to be overmuch wicked and foolish, yea also from that withdraw not thine hand, [i. e. from a regard to the former of these two precepts; or take care not to neglect the prudence I have recommended to the good man.] For he that feareth God shall come forth of them all; [he shall avoid both the destruction of the just man, that is imprudent; and the untimely death of the wicked and foolish. I need not add, how evident it is that your author hath abused and perverted this text also; as if it were an injunction to a man of learning and capacity not to fearch into the things of religion, beyond his neighbors and relations, who have no fuch advantages; -notwithstanding both Reason and Scripture teach us, that God will require of every man according to bis several ability. " Pyrrbo said that he had nothing more to propose at present, but to put Theophilus in mind of the other text, wherewith The 92d his author had concluded his book. Thereby text, Prov. he infinuates that Faith, or trust in the Lord, is a iii. 5. See very different thing from reason, or the dictates

P. 118. of a man's own understanding; which he thus ex-

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presses, p. 84. viz. that we are to captivate our rea- PARTISL fon to the obedience of Faith; to captivate, to lay it under the most absolute restraint and probibition; not to permit it the least opportunity or freedom to exert itself, or interpose on any occasion whatever." Theoobilus faid, he was so used to find the author give texts a quite different turn from what they have in Scripture, that he was not surprized at his perverting some of the most excellent maxims and best moral precepts, that ever were proposed for the regulation of mens conduct. But whoever would use Plato or Aristotle, Epitletus or M. Antoninus in that manner, would foon lofe his credit among men of letters. And furely the facred books ought to be treated with, at least, as much justice and candor as other antient authors.—As to the text which remains to be confidered; Solomon begins the chapter with advising his son to regard his admonitions and keep his commandments; for he commanded him to lead a pious, virtuous life, which was the way to manifest a good understanding, acquire many temporal bleffings, and obtain favor with God and man. And then he adds, Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowlege bim, and be will direct thy paths. Be not wife in thine own eyes: Fear the Lord, and depart from evil. And then he again points out the many and great advantages of fuch a pious, virtuous behavior. Leaning to bis own understanding was, therefore, to cast off the fear of the Lord, and to perfue what was evil. When God commands one thing, and men choose the contrary, then they do not trust in the Lord, but lean to their own understanding; they set up their own wisdom against God's, and will have it that happipeffe may be obtained in the way of vice and wickednesse, when God assures them that it is not to be found, but in the ways of his commandments. With

PARTIII. With what propriety, therefore, may it be faid to any man, to guard him against vice, Trust in the Lard with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowlege God, and be will direct thy paths. Be not wife in thine own eyes. Fear the Lord, and depart from evil. And then thou wilt take the true way to be happy? But is there, in this Proverb, any thing like an intimation that our understandings have nothing to do in judging of matters of religion; that we must not pretend to think about them; that the dictates of our own understandings, even when they are not perverted by fense and appetite, are directly contrary to what God directs or reveles? And that, therefore, we must (without thinking or offering to judge) blindly and implicitely receive whatever is recommended to us as coming from God; -even without so much as examining whether there are any rational proofs and evidences of its coming from God, or being a divine revelation?—Men may call fuch an abuse of passages of Scripture, by the name of wit, if they please ;- to me it appears to be horridly profane. And no man of learning would think it right, in the interpretation of any celebrated moralist among the antients.—Theophilus, having now come to an end of his interpretation of texts which related to the main argument, proposed that they should meet the next evening to finish. For he had some farther remarks upon the author and his arguments, which would at prefent take up too much of their time. Upon which the company broke up, with a refolution to come once more and hear the conclusion. or sun varie littler; they let up then own

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## The concluding DIALOGUE.

E. Hirray

ORITO now inquired of Theophilus, what re- PARTIII. marks he had to make upon the author or his argument? For, according to your own proposal (fais he) we are come together this evening to finish our design. Theophilus answered, that he had hitherto, with patience and attention, heard the objections which Pyrrho had produced out of his author against a rational Faith, and had given the best answers he was able. But now he designed to make some objections to what the author had offered; and Pyrrho was at liberty to defend his anthor, if he pleafed, or to make fuch answers to the remarks as he faw proper. Pyrrho could fay nothing against so fair a proposal; and therefore intimated to Theophilus, that he might procede as foon as he pleased. I would begin (said Theophilus) with some remarks on what your author hath faid, p. 63, &c. For, according to my notion of the Christian Faith, it is not a mere act of the understanding, but of the will also; it implies a candor of mind, a disposition to search after truth, or attend to it, a readinesse to professe it, and to be duely influenced by it. And, therefore, I can eafily fee how the want of it comes to be represented as a very great crime, and fo fevere a penalty denounced against infidelity. For, if Faith be a virtue, and Unbelief a vice, the one may be reasonably required, and the other threatened and punished as criminal. But, upon no other supposition, can any tolerable account be given. Your author had fagacity enough to fee this; and therefore thought himself obliged to say something by way of answer to such an objection. But what hath he faid, that, upon his own scheme, can fatisfie any rational or thinking man? Why, he has intimated that the Spirit worketh Faith in all

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PARTIII. all mankind, but some want a proper disposition. The universal tender of this conviction, bowever potent in its influence, must yet depend greatly upon the proper disposition of our minds to give it reception for its efficacy; and so far will give place, and afford ample matter of trial and probation, and become indeed a test of our obedience. Now, according to the main tenor of his argument in the rest of his book, this (in his own polite phraseology) is the most ridiculous jargon in the world. For has he not, in general, reprefented Faith as a mere act of the understanding, a matter of necessity, and not of choice, a thing which cannot be commanded, neither ought men to be threatened for the want of it, because it is a compliance out of their power? Here it is only the tender of a conviction; but elsewhere, it is omnipotence irradiating mens souls at once, inspiring or infusing a thorough conviction. This he calls the all-sufficient source and origin of our Faith. And afferts, that thus instructed, men may be brought to think all alike. Above all (sais he) it is of immediate influence, and operates without delay. And again; he fais, the conversion of Saul was effected, not by the force of dilatory inferences and conclusions, but by an irrefistible light from beaven, that flashed conviction in a moment. And thus called, we make no tarrying to turn unto the Lord, and put not off from day to day. Our Faith is completed in an instant, and the most perfect and finished creed produced at once. These dictates are, as it were, selfevident to the mind; but little differing from that of intuition itself. And yet, notwithstanding all this and a great deal more to the fame purpose; behold his main scheme disappears, his language and sentiments are quite altered! The Christians, who are for instantaneous conversion and irrelistible grace, do not contradict themselves in this manner. But (according to your author) though thus instruct. ed, all men may be brought to think alike; yet this

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this grace is univerfal, and all men are not brought PARTITI. to think alike. For though, by irrelistible light from heaven, conviction is flashed into their minds in a moment, yet it is in their power and wholly at their own choice whether they will be convinced or no. It is felf-evident and like intuition, yet it is not felf-evident, for men may not fee any evidence at all, unlesse they themselves please. He represents it in one place as irrefistible; in another place, it is fuch as any poor, weak, frail man may, by his bad disposition, resist. It is of immediate influence and operates without delay; yet, in many cases, it has no influence at all. It flashes conviction in a moment, and the most perfect and finished creed is produced at once; yet men may take time to confider whether they will believe at all, or no. Such is your author's unaccountable scheme; such his universal, particular grace; his irresistible, resistible conversion; such this same necessary Faith. which is purely free and voluntary, depending upon the proper disposition of our minds. Thus, notwithstanding his describing Faith as mere affent upon evidence, and a compliance out of our power; he has found, it must be, in a great measure, an act of the will; that therein its virtue lies; and that all he hath faid of it, as a mere act of the understanding, is fallacy and misrepresentation. case, conscience and believing have no connection in nature. Human invention cannot find an equal image to expresse the absurdity of an obedient or criminal understanding. The seeing of sounds, or bearing of colors, are illustrations far short of the nonsense of conscience in opinion upon that principle. The commanding men to believe, when God, by an irrefistible light from beaven, hath flashed conviction in a moment, and consequently, they cannot help believing; or to command men to believe, and lay them under the refraints of threats and authority, is an assempt equally weak and unjust, of Ballon Mm frightening

PARTIII. frightening them into a compliance out of their power; as long as this irrefiftible light from beaven bas not flashed conviction. This, therefore, is such a scheme, at first view, as no pretence of authority, buman or divine; no reasoning whatever, not even this acute performance of your author's, can command any regard or attention to, or indeed (as he expresses himself) any notice, but that of the contempt due to paradoxes, the most eminently impudent and ridiculous.—On the other hand; uniformly and constantly to represent Faith as a virtue, clearly points out the reasonablenesse of its being commanded, and unbelief's being fo feverely condemned. Here disbelieving and guilt have a meaning, when put together; fince the compliance required is not (a compliance out of our power, nor any longer) that of the understanding, but of the will, in its nature free, and therefore accountable. And, though we are not by any means chargeable for the effects of our apprehension; yet there is no reason but that we may be, with all justice, called to the strictest account for our obstinacy, impiety and perversenesse. All this is consistent talk in a rational believer; but in your author it is all confusion and contradiction.—From this clear and confistent account we see, that beresies and schisms may be justly condemned. For, according to the Scriptures, they are not merely different opinions, or the speculative results of different understandings, which bave certainly nothing in them either so strange or detestible; but are, on the contrary, consequences extremely natural, and no more than what was to be expected on fuch an occasion. But, in the facred writings, they are both of them condemned as works of the flesh; and as matters of pure choice. He is the schismatic, who, through a spirit of pride, uncharitablenesse or contention, covetousnesse or other worldly views, subverts the peace, and breaks the unity of the church of Christ; for he makes a rent in what ought to be united. And the persons who are impoling

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poling or uncharitable, and are the causes of divi- PARTIIIflons and animolities, are guilty of schifm, how great foever their number may be: And not they who, for the fake of peace, truth, and a good conscience, mark those that cause divisions and animolities, and feparate from them. Herefy, when criminal, and condemned as one of the works of the flesh, is the promoting an opinion, and supporting a party, out of worldly views. And accordingly the Scripture represents an beretic, as one that is perverted and fineth, being self-condemned. Now such schisms and beresies are justly ranked among the works of the flesh; and the persons, who are guilty of them, with great reason condemned. But if, by irrefistible light from beaven, conviction was to be flashed into mens minds in a moment; if thinking all alike was the Faith required; and this grace was universal; how is it possible that men should be guilty of schisms and beresies? - considered merely as different opinions, or the speculative results of different understandings?—Thus your author appears to have contradicted himself in the main argument.-If you have any thing to offer to show that he hath not contradicted himself; or to reconcile these two different accounts, I should be glad to hear you. Pyrrho faw the difficulty, and was unwilling to attempt a folution; but diverted the discourse by faying, " there was one part of his author, which Theophilus had not touched upon, viz. p. 24, &c. where he intimated that a rational Faith could not answer all the ends and purposes, which Faith has answered in former ages, and ought to answer upon us." Theophilus let him know, that he had on purpose reserved this to the conclusion. For (fais he) as I have already shown at large, how rational and excellent the Faith is, which Christianity requires; I may now, with advantage, point out the glorious effects, which it is calculated to pro-Mm 2 duce.

PARTIII duce. As to superseding the power of second causes, The 93d removing mountains by our Faith, walking upon the water, and the like your author knows very text. well that he needed not to have mentioned fuch 1 Cor. xiii. 2. See things to us. For we hold that miracles are p. 24. ceased long ago: -though they were highly proper to introduce Christianity into the world; and

Faith in the power of Christ to inable them to do fuch things, was rational in those disciples, who daily beheld such aftonishing effects of his power. But Faith in God, and in the Christian Revelation. is able to infpire us with the nobleft zeal, and with that truly laudable warmth, with which religious truths ought to be afferted and promoted; not, indeed, to

commit to the flames the writings of those who differ The 94th and 95th from us, or their persons, though they were intirely texts. in our power. For, if we attempt to spread our Luke ix. opinions that way, we know not subat manner of 55. Rom. x. 2. See Spirit we are of. But a rational Faith will inspire P. 5; 25; us with a zeal according to knowlege, which is the 8o. See only zeal that the Scriptures recommend, or which also the 83d text. The 96th

can ever deferve that name ; - a zeal to contend earnestly for the Faith, by good arguments and exemplary text, Jude lives; to attack the principles of Infidels, by an appeal to their understandings, and by laying before them a just account of the nature and evidence of Christianicy; and by the like methods to preserve Christians in a stedfast adherence to their principles, and establish them in their most Holy Faith. Such persons, as have their understandings exercised to discern between good and evil, and have seen the evidence of the truth of the Gospel, will not be The 97th like children toffed to and fro with every wind of doc-

trine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftinesse,

whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but will be rooted

and grounded, and settled in the Faith. They build

upon a rock, and nothing can shake their foun-

text, Eph. iv. 14. See p. 26.

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See p. 25.

dation, nothing overturn it. When truth gets fuch

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such fast hold of a man, he is the most likely to Partill. persevere unto the end. For truth varies not, nor can evidence ever shift about to the side of error and falshood. Such men pray, indeed, that they may continue stedfast and immoveable, not against argument, but against imposture and delusion; and especially against the dangerous power of vice, which (of all things) most strongly tempts men to infidelity. - Faith is not the fame thing with demonstration. The Scripture doth, indeed, call it, The evidence The 98th of things not feen. There Faith is taken object text, Heb. tively, for the doctrine of Faith, the fure word or xi. 1. See testimony of God, which is to us an arridor. testimony of God, which is to us an evidence, an argument, or convincing proof of those invisible things, which are there reveled. And, having fuch a Revelation, we walk by Faith and not by fight; The 99th -we regulate our conduct with a regard to a fue text, ture, unseen state. But here is, in all this, no 2 Cor. v. inconsistency between Faith and Reason. For we 7. See do not mean that our Faith ought to be the refult of our own reasonings, as that may signifie the finding out the doctrines of the Gospel, without a Revelation. But we may reason and argue from the Scriptures; and it is, indeed, our duty so to do. The arguments from thence are good and conclusive, as the Scriptures carry fuch evidences of a divine Revel lation. In common affairs, we act upon Faith, as rationally as upon demonstration. And, in many cases, a man would be laughed at, that should refuse to do so. "Well but, Theophilus, (faid Pyrrbo) Do you imagine that a rational believer can have that complacency and satisfaction of mind, which flows from that inspired, insufed Faith, of which my author hath faid fo much? For, p. 29, he is very positive, he cannot." Theophilus replied, that every believer was not inspired; and therefore it could not fignifie much, what confequences would, or would not, flow from fuch a thing, if it were true.

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PARTIII true. But I would ask you, Pyrrbo, whether a man, a rational creature, can injoy greater tranquility and confidence of Spirit from any reflection than from this, that he hath made an honest use of his Reason, and of those faculties which God hath given him?\_that he hath, as both Reason and Scripture direct, proved all things, with a view to hold fast that which is good?—that he hath diligently searched into the Reason of the Faith and Hope that is in bim? And, that he hath not therein labored in vain? Must it not yield the highest satisfaction to every thinking man's mind, that his Faith is built upon a rock? that he hath carefully and fincerely inquired, that he might fee whether these things are fo? And that, upon a thorough and deliberate examination, he hath found, that Christianity is the wildom of God, and that the miracles, worked in confirmation of it, proceded from the power of God? A repeted review of the grounds and Reasons of his Faith doth not diminish or obfeure the evidence, but strengthens and confirms it: and, instead of rendering him liable at every turn to misgivings and distrusts about the sufficiency of his Reasonings and arguments, secures that solid peace of mind, which neither infidelity and irreligion, nor enthusiasm, caprice of thought or complexion, or a mere mechanical religion, can ever afford .- Your author talks of such a Faith, as is to force men to be virtuous against their inclinations. He had forgot this (I suppose) when he afferted that it must greatly depend upon the proper disposition of our minds to give it reception for its efficacy. But, if he had declared uniformly for a mechanical religion, of force enough to make us virtuous against our inclinations; the rational believers would have rejected his scheme, and told him, that forced virtue is a contradiction in terms, and no virtue at all. The man that is forced to be good is, in a moral and relitrue.

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teligious view, good for nothing. But if fuch a PARTILL rational Faith, as hath been described, doth not influence a man to a pious and holy life, nothing can. For he is not only convinced by his reason. that there is a God, a providence and a future state; but he is also confirmed by a Revelation, which carries in it many evident marks of truth and credibility. And that Revelation affures him that, if he deny himself of ungodlinesse and worldly lusts; if he resist the temptations which abound in the present state of things; if he give up all unreasonable gratifications, and steddily practife virtue and piety; he shall be no loser in the end. but be amply rewarded in a future state of recompence.—He knows that, in a few days, all temporal injoyments will be over; but he is fully and rationally fatisfied that there will be another state. where the fecrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, every character fet in a just light, and every man recompenced according to his prevailing character. The mortifying all our most beloved lusts and the strongest propensities of our nature, is not too substantial a sacrifice to be made, in order to our inheriting eternal life; The evidence of the reward is proportioned to the difficulty of the duty required. Such arguments are a sufscient basis for a belief, which is to produce (in wicked men) a new course of life, and an absolute mastery of their passions, in opposition to all the importunate solicitations of sense, and the violent appetites of those, who continue vicious and depraved. The obvious and palpable interest of a rational believer is to postpone hose objects which are present and solicite the enses, and to depend confidently on distant expectaions and promifes for his compensation. It is enough, hat he hath all the moral certainty in these proofs that e can defire, and that this is the highest degree of raunal evidence that the nature of the subject can possibly amit, [as your author allows it to be, p. 32.] Surely eternity

PARTIII eternity is sufficient to weigh in the scale against this fort life; and the pure, unmixed, everlatting happinesse of the virtuous, against the transitory and imperfect, the mean and ignoble gratifications of the vicious and abandoned, during this fleeting scene of things.—Nor is there any thing absurd or unintelligible in the rational believer's dying a martyr in fuch a fituation, where life cannot be preferved in the profession of the truth, and the practice of everlatting righteoufnesse. As to the infidel, who confines his views within the compasse of this short life, if he should die a martyr for truth and virtue (as numbers have done to their lust and appetite) I must be free to think that Abner's elegy would exactly fute bim, " He died as a fool dieth!" And the reason is evident; for such 2 Sam. iii. an one lived as the fool liveth. But what is that to

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The 98th text.

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33. See p. the understanding and rational believer ?- To one who hath, upon evidence, had a rational conviction of a God, a providence and a furure state, and quits this life with the clearest prospect of something betser to succede in its room? Men, who are immerfed in the world, or given up to fense and appetite, may infinuate that these things deserve not one moment's attention; but the thoughtful and confiderate man reasons more justly, and reckons these things to be of the highest importance. Under this thorough, settled conviction, the glorious and undaunted confessors went through most amazing trials, with a wondrous steddinesse; and this Faith, for 300 years, gave numbers of them the victory over this world, when all its powers were combined to deftroy the innocent flock of Christ, and even to extirpate the very name of the Christian. from off the face of the earth. It was such a clear and firong, fuch a lively and convincing evidence of a refurrection to an happy immortality, that in fpired the martyrs with fuch aftonishing degrees of

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fortitude, that led them to incounter the last terrible PARTIII. consequence, and infused all that amazing constancy and resolution into men expiring under the last extremity of torture; and made them prefer the prefent and certain pangs of agonizing upon the rack, to all the most flattering allurements of the present world. they reasoned, in the strongest and most convincing manner, when they looked upon time as nothing compared with eternity, and fought the perfect happinesse of an immortal life, by a stedfast adherence to truth and righteousnesse, under all difficulties and discouragements whatever.—He must be a man of a very loose and trifling turn of mind, that can make himself merry with such a subject; and must be so far from being good himself, that he doth not feem to have any notion of what true goodnesse is. Is there, then, no worth, no excellence, in the character of one who hath lived a pious and upright life, and chosen rather to abide by his profession, and seal it with his blood, than part with his integrity? What is the displeasure of man, who can but kill the body, in comparison of the displeasure of bim, who can destroy both soul and body in bell? And how great does the character of the glorious author and finisher of our Faith appear; when be, instead of the joy that was proposed to him, indured the crosse and despised the shame? The most pointed latyr, the most cruel fcoffs of infolent and abandoned wit, the most subtile malice of the old and experienced tyrant, or the most practised and diabolical father inquisitor, who is skilled in the art of teizing and torturing a poor, miferable creature, in the most sensible and exquisite manner; - are not fo dreadful as the chidings of a guilty confeience, and the agonizing tortures of despair. That same rational conviction, which carried the true believer through a state of indolent toleration, and the Nn Smooth

PARTIII. finooth calms of life, and rendered him proof against the temptations of such a state, will, in a time of persecution, and when matters come to such a criss, collect all her scattered force, exert her utmost vigor, triumph over seen things, render the rational Christian sirm and stedsast amidst the rage and cruelty of malicious murtherers, and inable him to be faithful to the last to a persecuted religion.—Nothing, indeed, but a fixed and well-grounded considence of being happy for ever, in another world, could effectually prevail on him to renounce all his hopes and interests in this.—But this he has; and therefore he acts up to the sould such that the seal test and therefore he acts up to the sould such the seal test here were imagination.

The 99th text, Heb. xii. 4. See P. 35.

This has been more than the mere imagination, or talk, of a Rationalist, warmed with contemplation. It hath been verified in numberlesse facts and instances, from St. Stephen down to this day: -Such inflances as cannot be produced for any fystem of philosophy, or any scheme of religion, besides that of the Gospel. What your author hath observed, p. 82. is but too true, that many bave made it their principle to vary, without scruple, every way, as their temporal interest hath led them; bave run readily into every denomination of Christians, by turns; and have feemed to bold Christ's church to be always the church in being. But all ought not to be blamed for some; nor the inconsistency of particular persons looked upon as any argument against the truth of Christianity, or a rational Faith. The lift of martyrs, confessors, and those who have suffered with and for their religion, has not been fmall and inconsiderable. The ten persecutions in the primitive church, and other instances of a later date, that I need not remind you of, plainly shew us that multitudes of the most pious and excellent persons that ever lived, knew in whom they had believed, and what folid grounds they went upon. They

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They had computed, with the most impartial exactnesse, PARTIII. the loffe and the gain; and, upon the strictest estimate, found that this life is a dream, a mere fugitive shadow, but that eternity is a substantial good, and a matter of infinite importance. They had the most powerful inducements to carry them through the conflict. They kept their eye steddily fixed upon the exceding weight of glory, by Faith faw beaven The 100th opened to their view, and looked forward, with and rouft longing eyes, to that fignal day, when the Son of texts, Man shall stand plainly before their eyes, and be reveled 2 Cor. iv. in all bis glory, to support and reward bis faithful ser-vii. 50. vants, and to render unto every man, according as his See p. 35. works bave been. Men may, if they please, in an impious and profane manner, ridicule thefe things, and indeavor to turn into jest the hopes of the righteous man, the tortures of the confessor, and the agonizing pains of the expiring martyr. But these are not matters to be jested with. Eternity is too ferious and important an affair for banter and ridicule. And the nature and evidence of true religion are of moment enough to induce all virtuous and thinking men carefully to examine into them, and let them have their proper weight and I hope, living and dying, they will influence. ever be things of the last consequence with me. And I heartily wish they may be so with others alfo!

Theophilus's warm and affectionate manner of concluding, struck all the company with attention, and was observed to make great impressions upon them. Pyrrbo acknowleged that he was greatly obliged to Theophilus, for the pains he had taken at his request; and promised, with care, to reexamine all that had passed. They both thanked Crito, who had so often sate as chairman, and kept order, during their whole debate. All the com-

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pany.

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PARTIII pany expressed themselves, in very grateful terms, for the favor of having been so freely admitted. And the three friends, as they looked upon one another to be, in the main, honest and sincere, continued to maintain the same mutual friendship and good-will to one another as ever.

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obliged to the codes, for the parass het part and at his forces are not his forces to examine all rout bad parts. They both to a seal Orig, who had to often hee as chairman, and the order, during their whale departs. And her their whale departs.

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